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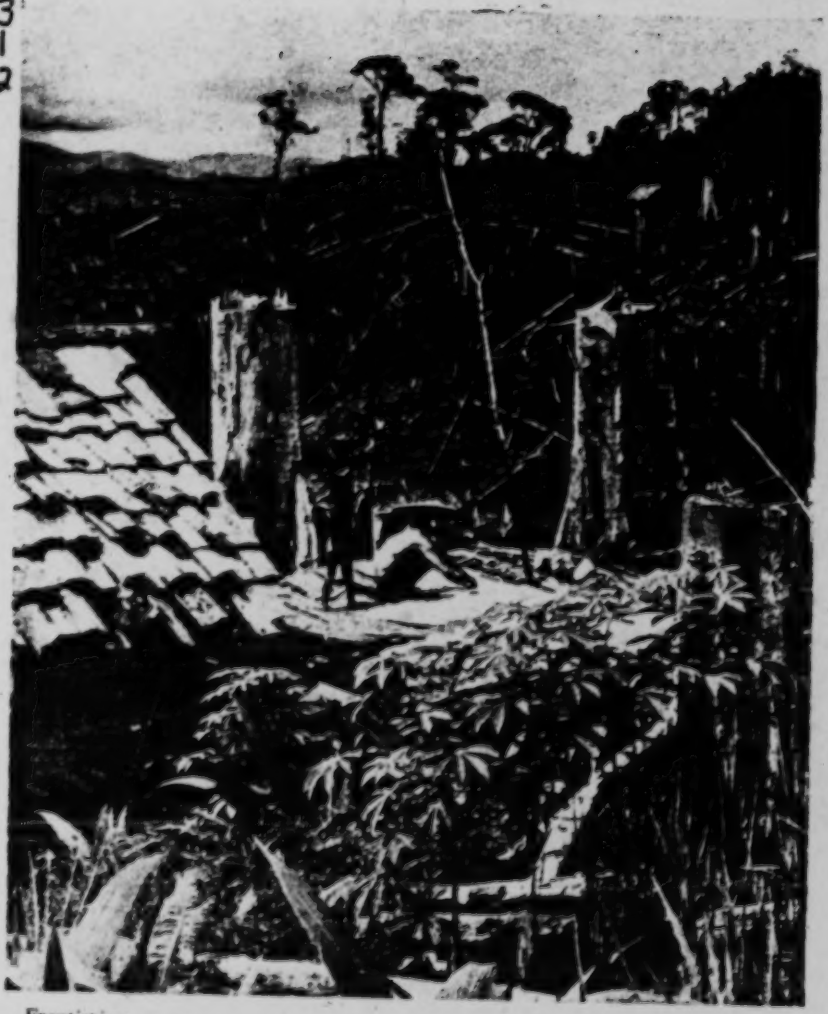

Frontispiece

An Iban rice farm in central Sarawak

[facing title page]

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Part I

AN INTRODUCTORY ACCOUNT OF IBAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The Iban Long-House

1. The most salient characteristic of Iban social organization is the practice of long-house domicile. Anyone who has travelled in the interior of Borneo is familiar with the conspicuous shape of a long-house: an attenuated structure supported on innumerable hard-wood posts, it stretches for a hundred yards or more along the terraced bank of a river, its roof forming an unbroken expanse. Superficially viewed the Iban long-house has the appearance of being a single structural unit, and many casual observers have made the facile inference that the long-house is therefore the outcome of some sort of communal or group organization and ownership. For the Iban, at least, this inference is the very reverse of true. Among the various families which make up a long-house community there does exist a network of kinship ties, but the Iban long-house is primarily an aggregation of independently owned family apartments. The fact that these apartments are joined one to the other so as to produce a long-house detracts little from their essential autonomy. Indeed, the unbroken expanse of roof tends to conceal the fact that the Iban long-house is fundamentally a series of discrete entities: the independent family units of a competitive and egalitarian society.

2. A long-house, then, is made up of a series of apartments which are joined longitudinally one to the other so as to produce a single attenuated structure. Each of these apartments is owned and occupied by a particular family group, and these family groups are the basic corporate units of Iban society. The principal divisions of a family apartment are:

(*a*) the *bilek*, or living room;
(*b*) the *sadau*, or loft;
(*c*) the *ruai*, or roofed gallery;
(*d*) the *tanju*, or open platform.

All of these, and the general structure of an Iban long-house are shown in Figure 1, which is based on Rumah Tungku, Sungai Tiau, Kapit District.

The Family Apartment

3. (*a*) The *bilek*. The most important section of each apartment is the *bilek*, which is the family living room and the place where the valued property of the family is stored. Thus the *bilek* is the normal location for cooking, eating, sleeping and a multitude of domestic tasks. At the back of the *bilek*, and frequently along both its sides, are stacked huge jars (*tajau*), bronze gongs (*tawak*), and other kinds of heirloom property, which are important indications of the wealth and status of an Iban family. The *bilek* of a long-house always vary slightly in size,

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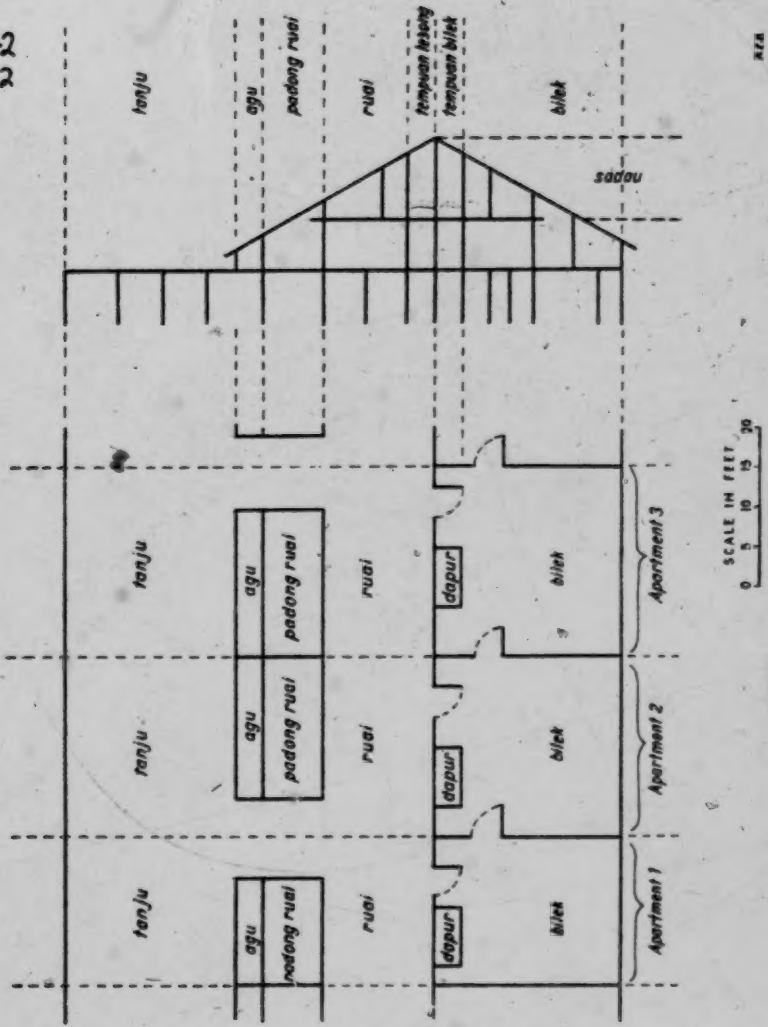

Figure 1. Plan of an Iban Long-house

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and the width of the wall facing on to the *ruai* is some indication of the general social standing of the family that owns it. In Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut, the smallest *bilek* was 12ft. 6ins. wide by 16ft. deep, while the largest was 23ft. wide by 17ft. 6ins. deep.

(*b*) The *sadau*. Above each *bilek*, and jutting out over the *ruai*, is the *sadau*, which is a kind of garret or loft. Here, in immense bark bins, is stored the grain (*padi*) grown by the members of the family. Also kept in the *sadau* are the various implements used in farming, and the mats, baskets and trays used when *padi* is being husked and winnowed.

(*c*) The *ruai*. The door of each family *bilek* opens on to another section of the apartment known as the *ruai*, and which—like the *bilek*—is the private property of the family to which it belongs. The *ruai* serves many purposes. Immediately adjacent to the wall dividing the *bilek* from the *ruai* is a section about three to four feet in width, known as the *tempuan lesong*. Here stands the *lesong*, a large wooden mortar, in which the women of the family pound their *padi* with long, hardwood poles, so to husk it. Adjoining this narrow strip comes another section, usually about 10 to 12 feet in width, and completely unobstructed by posts or partitions; it thus forms a corridor or gallery giving access to all parts of the long-house. It is, in fact, a kind of village street, and is used by all the members of the community as a general thoroughfare. Flanking this corridor or 'street' are the *padong ruai*, open, rectangular spaces, one of which belongs to each family apartment. These *padong ruai* are the main centres of community life and social intercourse. Like the *bilek*, of which it is an extension, each section of the *ruai* (composed of the three divisions just described) is owned by a single family. It is the duty of each family to keep its section of the corridor in good repair so that all may use it. But this general use involves no diminution of ownership rights; each family retains the right to cordon off its section of the *ruai* during the performance of certain rituals, and on other occasions to insist (on the pain of fine) that prohibitions governing its use be fully observed by all members of the long-house community. The boundaries of each family section of the *ruai* are clearly marked by the main supporting posts of the long-house structure.

(*d*) The *tanju*. Beyond the *ruai*, and so not covered by any form of roof, is the *tanju*, an open platform, usually about 20 to 25 feet wide. As with the corridor of the *ruai*, all the independently owned section of the *tanju* are joined to form an unbroken, raised platform, which fronts the whole long-house. The *tanju* is used for a wide variety of domestic tasks; in particular it is the place where *padi* is sunned prior to pounding.

4. It is the joining together of a number of different family apartments (each made up of a *bilek*, a *sadau*, a *ruai* and a *tanju*) that produces the attenuated structure known as a long-house. A long-house community is thus, in essence, a village consisting of a single 'street' of attached apartments. It is most important to realize, however, that each apartment is the private property of one family. Figure 2, depicts a typical Iban long-house, in this case, of ten family apartments. Let us now examine more closely the various family units of which a long-house community is composed, for these are the basic corporate groups of Iban social and economic life.

The Iban Bilek Family

5. In Government and other publications the family apartments of an Iban long-house are commonly referred to as 'doors.' A long-house, that is, is usually

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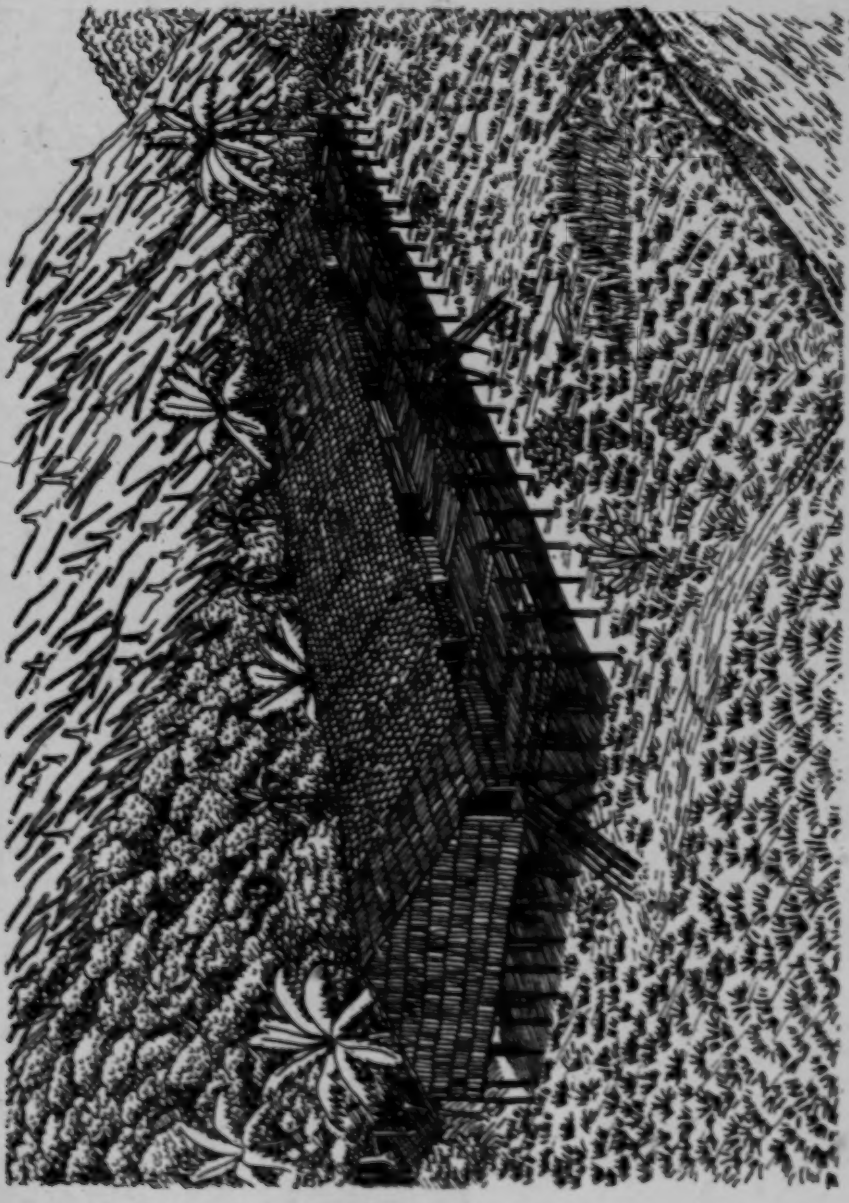

Figure 2. An Iban Long-house

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survey of the Baleh area, and although the allocation of territories was under general Governmental surveillance, there seems to have been no formal registration of titles. In the absence of a detailed survey, it is not possible to give accurate figures for the extent of the various long-house territories, but from those which I was able to inspect it seems that they ranged from about five to fifteen square miles.

Principles of Land Tenure among the Iban

45. As already noted the territory allotted to a long-house community is not held in communal ownership, but rather all the *bilek* families of the community have equal rights of access to the land. That is, these rights of access are held in common as against the members of all other long-houses. Actual family ownership is established by the felling of primary jungle (*kampong*), and this is always undertaken by individual *bilek* families. By clearing the virgin forest from a tract of land, a *bilek* family secures full discretionary rights over the secondary jungle (*damun*) which springs up within a few months of the first *padi* harvest, and thereafter, for as long as it remains in the local community, this *bilek* family retains ownership of all land, for the initial cultivation of which it has been responsible. Once land has been acquired in this way it becomes part of the general property of the *bilek*, and is inherited in the same way as are the other valuables of the family. That is, land is inherited by the *bilek* family as such, and all those who remain members of this local group possess parcenary rights in the land which it has acquired. Marrying out of one's natal group involves the relinquishment of these rights, and the assumption of similar interests in one's marital *bilek* family, these circumstances applying both to men and to women.

46. When the partition of a *bilek* family occurs, both sections retain the right to farm land acquired prior to this event. There is thus no formal partition of the land, as there is of the moveable effects of the *bilek*, but rather a joint sharing of rights of access to the secondary jungle that was once common property. The usufruct of this secondary jungle is decided in conference between the two sections of the *bilek* when the occasion arises. In course of time therefore, it is parcelled out for re-use, and in this way each part of the original *bilek* family establishes presumptive tenure of the *damun* land which it puts into cultivation for a second time. However, all virgin jungle felled by either section subsequent to partition is independently owned from the outset.

The Settlement of New Territory

47. When pioneering new territory it is customary for a group of *bilek* families (the number may vary from three or four to more than a dozen) to work side by side. This has many advantages; it means that animal pests are kept under better control, that there is opportunity for the formation of co-operative groups (based on the principle of reciprocity) which make easier the formidable task of felling several acres of primeval rain-forest, and that all the families concerned can live together in a single *dampa*, which, though smaller in scale, is constructed on exactly the same principles as a long-house. The Baleh country is very broken and extremely well watered, with innumerable side spurs rising abruptly to straggling and uneven ridges that vary from several hundred to a thousand feet and more in height. The usual pattern of exploitation is for a group of *bilek* families to begin in the lower reaches of a tributary stream. As far as possible, each *bilek* family selects a separate spur, and commencing at the foot moves up it until the crest of the ridge is reached. The average area of an Iban farm (*umai*) is

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period of fifteen years or more. In the course of time therefore, the various holdings of each *bilek* family become dispersed over a wide area. This dispersal creates special problems.

69. Growing hill rice in jungle clearings is an undertaking fraught with many difficulties. One of the chief of these is the threat of depredation by marauding animals. In the forests live, and in large numbers, wild pigs, deer, and monkeys, all of which—given the chance—will invade a farm and take their fill of the growing *padi*. It becomes imperative therefore that a farm be vigilantly guarded. To achieve this the Iban live as near as they can to their farms. There are also other advantages. Much time and effort are saved if the farm be near at hand. During the course of the agricultural year a man visits his farm from 150 to 200 or more times. And the women, on whom the heavy burden of weeding and reaping falls, may be even more frequent visitors. By having a strategically placed base, a family can, in the course of a year, save themselves many hundreds of hours of arduous walking over difficult and hilly country. A subsidiary house, built in the same valley as the family's farm, brings within easy reach a hill-side that may be two to three hours' journey from the main long-house. This ease of access becomes an especial boon, when, after reaping, the *padi* has to be carried down from the hill tops—in huge baskets (*lanji*) slung from the shoulders—to be threshed, winnowed and stored. Again, a house near to relatively unfrequented jungle presents far better opportunities than does the main long-house for that foraging for wild fruits, fungi, and other edible plants, at which Iban women excel. There are likewise better opportunities for hunting and fishing. And at the same time, the precincts of the long-house are given a chance to recuperate.

The Dampa System

70. All of these factors give rise to what we may call *the dampa system*. When a new settlement is founded, the forest in its immediate vicinity is felled first, and as long as farms lie within a radius of about half a mile to a mile (or slightly further, if they can be reached by canoe), activities are conducted from the main long-house. After a few years however, as more distant land is brought into cultivation, accessibility becomes a problem, and when this stage is reached the community breaks up into a number of distinct groups—each group farming in a different part of the long-house territory. Typically, the whole community moves to the same general quarter of the territory, where each group takes over the pioneering of a small (i.e. unnavigable) tributary stream. These arrangements are decided upon at a series of conferences (*baum*) in which all the *bilek* families of the community participate. A proposal to farm new land is first mooted by several closely related *bilek* families (i.e. containing siblings, first or second cousins), and usually such a group will have a leader who, although he is never formally appointed, plays a major part in the inauguration and planning of the venture. Ideally he is a man skilled in the taking of auguries. Other families develop parallel plans, and gradually several groups are formed. In size these groups vary from two to ten or more different *bilek* families, depending largely on the extent of the area in which they propose to farm.

71. As soon as the composition of a group has been settled it then operates as a separate unit, its component *bilek* families deciding amongst themselves the way in which the tract of jungle they have chosen is to be parcelled out. But first of all they must decide upon a site for their farm house, or *dampa*. The spot selected is always centrally situated in the valley where cultivation is to occur

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(Plate 4); what is wanted is a level terrace as near as possible to a bathing pool, and a good supply of drinking water. If the valley be confined, and flat land scarce, then two or more *dampa* will be constructed in the same locality. A *dampa* is a structure built on exactly the same pattern as an ordinary long-house, though always on a somewhat smaller scale. Just as in a long-house (*rumah panjai*), each family possesses an apartment of its own, consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai*, and *tanju*. Commonly the walls of a *dampa* are of bark, and its flooring of split bamboo, but it is nonetheless, a substantial and well-built house, designed to serve as a main residence for some years. It is usual, for example, to find most *dampa* properly roofed with ironwood shingles—the only form of lasting protection against the torrential rains of central Borneo; and they are comfortably furnished with all of the everday requirements of the Iban. Essential equipment is carried from the main long-house—and the *dampa* becomes the domestic headquarters of the family. In its loft (*sadau*) the *padi* stocks of the *bilek* (which may amount to 100 bushels or more) are stored, and beneath the house, and in its precincts, roam the domestic fowls and pigs of which each family possesses at least a few. Many *dampa* indeed, have the appearance of being permanent habitations. Few of them, however, are occupied for more than five or six years in succession, for as soon as the slopes of the surrounding valleys have all been cultivated, it becomes imperative to move on to fresh jungle. When this stage is reached, the Iban must perforce change their place of abode; though they usually do so with considerable reluctance, the transporting of all the manifold appurtenances of a *bilek* family over several miles of hilly country being no light undertaking. Sometimes it is possible to travel by canoe, but more often than not everything must be laboriously carried on foot. The old *dampa* is dismantled, and the more valuable parts of it (e.g. ironwood shingles and floor laths, etc.), taken to the new site where a new house is erected. The whole operation, the clearing of the site, building the apartment, and transporting the *padi* stocks and domestic paraphenalia, commonly takes several months; and the time chosen is always the period between the completion of harvest and the beginning of the next agricultural cycle, during the months of April, May, June and July. When the move has been achieved, the new *dampa* then becomes a base for farming the hills and valleys that encircle it, and serves as a main homestead during the four or five ensuing years—or until such time as all the jungle within easy reach has been felled and farmed.

72. In this intermittent way, *dampa* follows *dampa*, until a return is made to the main long-house, there to farm again the secondary jungle in its immediate precincts, and so initiate a further grand cycle of cultivation. The exact nature of this grand cycle of cultivation varies from long-house to long-house, according to the number of *bilek* families in the community and the extent of the territory available to them; i.e. the 'population-land balance.'[1] The range of variation is, in fact, considerable, but many communities in the Baleh region are in a position to follow grand cycles of cultivation of from 15 to 25 years' duration. If one assumes a cycle of say 20 years, it is typical that not more than about a quarter of this period is spent actually farming from the main long-house. The remainder of the period is taken up in operating from a succession of three or four different *dampa*, spaced at strategic points within the long-house territory.

73. When the *dampa* system is being practised, it is usual nonetheless, for family members to make fairly regular visits to the long-house to inspect property

[1] W. Allan, "Studies in African Land Usage in Northern Rhodesia," Oxford, 1949, p. 74.

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

end of the weeding period, the first *padi* to be planted is approaching maturity,[1] and about to burst into ear. There now ensues a phase of about a month or more during which the ripening *padi* has to be guarded from marauding animals. For some time previously—during the height of the weeding—the men of each *bilek* family have been preparing for this vital manoeuvre.

126. Most important of all is the construction of a farm hut, or *langkau umai*. Farm huts vary a good deal in style and size, depending on the site of a family's *dampa*. If the farm happens to be within sight of the *dampa*, and near enough to be reached within a few minutes, a family usually satisfies itself with a roughly-built *langkau*, which is used as a watch-house while the padi is ripening, and subsequently as a storage place during the harvest; except during the guarding period however, the family sleeps at, and operates from its *dampa*. On the other hand, if a farm be distant more than about twenty minutes from the *dampa*, it generally happens that the family concerned builds a substantial *langkau umai*, and uses it as a semi-permanent base during most of the agricultural cycle. The building of such a *langkau* cannot—obviously—begin until after the burn. Quite often a beginning is made during the time of dibbling, but the main work is accomplished while the women are engaged in weeding. Poles for the framework and *rotan* to lash them together, are fetched from neighbouring jungle; the walls are fashioned from large sheets of bark, and the roof from bark shingles. Most *langkau* consist of a single, small room (about 12 ft. × 12 ft.), opening directly onto a small, open and raised platform (*tanju*) (Plate 14). The building of *langkau* is an exclusively male task. Always a central and elevated site is chosen, overlooking as much as possible of the farm. Once the building is complete, members of the *bilek* family begin spending the night there, and during the

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[1] The Iban recognize the following stages in the growth of the *padi* plant:

1). *ngemulu idong* (like the hairs of the nose); e.g. first emergence of the shoot from the ground.
2). *narum* (like needles).
3). *niko pipit* (like the tail of the rice sparrow—Munia sp.).
4). *bayam ribut* (plaything of the winds).
5). *ngelambong batang anak* (above the smaller logs).
6). *basah kain Beketan* (the skirt of a Bukitan woman will become wet when she walks through the *padi*).
7). *basah kain Iban* (the skirt of an Iban woman will become wet when she walks through the *padi*.
(Another name for this stage is *dara biak*—like a girl who has just reached puberty).
8). *dara tuai* (like a girl of say 18-20 years).
9). *betumboh dan* (the growing out of branches).
10). *ngandong laki* (pregnant like a man).
11). *ngandong indu* (pregnant like a woman).
12). *bigh buloh* (splitting open like a bamboo shoot); i.e. the emergence of the panicle begins.
13). *ngetup dilah* (like a tongue protruding); i.e. the panicle.
14). *baru bekangau* (newly calling from afar); i.e. the *padi* spirits are thought of as calling to one another in the fields.
15). *baru baka chuit* (newly fully out).
16). *tebai murai* (thickly mature).
17). *brat dan* (heavy branches).
18). *tuai buah* (mature fruits).
19). *mansau mulut* (ripe lips).
20). *betengan tangkai* (half ripe panicles).
21). *rapus tangkai indu* (the panicle of the main plant of each *padi* clump is fully ripe).
22). *nyau nganhong* (hanging down with ripeness); i.e. the height of the harvest.
23). *nyau patah patong* (the panicles are broken at a nodule and hanging down with ripeness).

It will be observed that these terms offer several examples of the manner in which the Iban personify their *padi*.

critical ripening period and the early stages of the harvest, someone is always present to keep watch over the *padi* (Plate 15). At Rumah Nyala in 1949-50, there were 12 *bilek* families with substantial *langkau umai*, suitable for semi-permanent residence, while 14 others had less pretentious huts, which were only slept in during periods of special vigilance.

127. The months of November and December, when weeding is taking place, cover critical stages in the growth of the young *padi*. According to Iban notions, the *padi* plant is liable to become afflicted with a range of various illnesses (*tabin*), and they apply to these the same terms used to describe certain human ailments. Green smut, for example, which attacks and destroys single kernals, substituting for them large sclerotial masses of its own, is equated with warts (*butir*). Again, *padi* is often described as suffering from a cold (*renga*) or a headache (*pedra*). While the young *padi* is forming a careful watch is kept over the farm, and if any disease makes itself evident, rituals are at once performed. The general purpose of these rituals (*memali umai*) is to restore the ailing *padi* to health. If the trouble be serious, a clump of *padi pun* is taken to the long-house, placed in a shrine (*ranyai*), and the gods summoned to succour and treat it. It is then carried back to the farm to be re-planted, where prayers are uttered (cf. Para. 61), and magical potions scattered over the rest of the growing *padi*. At the same time magical rites directed at driving away insect and animal pests are widely performed.

Traps, and Other Protective Devices

128. During the period of weeding the men begin to turn to the devising of other measures for the protection of their crops. A common stratagem is the building of a strong palisade of stakes bordering those parts of the farm judged to be especially prone to attack by deer and pigs. Others wait until the panicles have emerged and then clear a lane, five or six yards in width, along the main farm boundaries. The theory is that animals are wary of exposing themselves by crossing this circumvallation, and that if they do take the risk there is a good chance of their being seen and chased away. Traps are also widely used, there being three main types:

(*a*) the *peti*, a spear-trap for pigs,
(*b*) the *bubong*, a large box-trap for monkeys,
(*c*) the *tinya*, a spring-pole trap for smaller animals.

Most popular of all is the *peti*. It consists of an upturned, forked sapling, one limb of which is embedded firmly in the ground, while the other, to which an extremely sharp, fire-hardened, bamboo spear is fastened, is held back at high tension, leaving a narrow space (about 24"—26") just wide enough to permit the passage of a pig; across this space is suspended a fine fibre, which when displaced by a few inches trips a trigger, and releases the spear (Plate 13). The setting of a *peti* involves very careful measurement, for it is so designed that the spear will strike the pig (*babi:* Sus barbatus) in its most vital part. These *peti* are scattered along the edge of a farm, and especially in those places where pig tracks have been detected. Because of the danger to wandering humans, warning signs (consisting of a cross-stick in a notched upright) are usually erected, but it is always necessary to move with caution when approaching an Iban farm, by other than the main paths. Not infrequently mock traps and signs are also erected, further to alarm and confuse the pigs. The *bubong* is a large box-shaped trap, built of stout poles or logs, and baited with cucumbers, pawpaws and the like; dislodgement of the bait trips the trigger and causes a heavy lid to fall, cutting

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NOTES ON PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

243 342 *Frontispiece.* A view of the *padi* farm of the *bilek* family of Kubu, Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, in 1950. This farm was one of a series that extended along the crest of a 800ft.—900ft. ridge overlooking the headwaters of the Sungai Nyunggau and the main valley of the Baleh river. (See Sketch Maps 1 and 3). Cleared from virgin jungle in 1949, the land is being cultivated for the second year in succession. In the foreground, young *padi* and cassava plants are springing up. Beyond the farm hut (on the open platform of which are Kubu's wife and grandson), Kubu's farm extends towards that of his neighbour, Kamba (the augur of Rumah Nyala), whose farm hut can also be discerned. Virgin jungle (*kampong*) is still standing on the spur in the right background, while to the left are slopes thickly covered with young secondary growth (*dijap kampong*). Photograph taken on 23rd December, 1950, by Mr. B. E. Smythies.

243 313 137 1. Iban farm clearings in Sungai Saban, Ulu Sut, Kapit District, Third Division, Sarawak. Photograph taken on 3rd September, 1949, just before the firing of the farms. In the background is Mt. Goram (3,073 ft.).

243 137 2. A farm clearing (*umai*) in virgin jungle (*kampong*) in the Upper Batang Baleh, Kapit District. Photograph taken on 27th February, 1949, when the farm was covered with a heavy crop of *padi*. In the lower right hand corner is part of the roof of the farm house (*dampa*) from which the land was worked. Note tree stumps with buttress roots.

342 252 3. Dampa Adin, one of the subsidiary farm houses of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, Kapit District. On 20th February, 1951, when this photograph was taken Dampa Adin housed 12 *bilek* families. The woman on the open platform (*tanju*) is tending *padi* that is being sunned prior to pounding.

000 4. The pattern of Iban agriculture: from the long-house in the valley the surrounding hills have been brought into cultivation. (For this photograph taken in Sungai Bangkit, Kapit District, I am indebted to Mr. B. E. Smythies).

243 245 5. An Iban farm (*umai*) in Sungai Tiau, Ulu Mujong, Kapit District. Photograph taken on 8th December, 1949, when the land was covered with young *padi*. To the left is a grove of sago palms, grown as a scarcity crop. In the valley, a watch-house (*langkau umai*) is in course of construction.

342 137 6. Dampa Along, one the subsidiary farm houses of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, Kapit District. This *dampa*, occupied by three *bilek* families, was still in course of construction when this photograph was taken on 24th September, 1949, and only the central family had finished building the open platform (*tanju*) of its apartment. The felled secondary jungle (*damun*) shown in the background had been fired two days previously, but the burn was a very poor one.

313 7. Felling in virgin jungle (*kampong*). The axe-man is standing on a scaffolding (*tundan*) which lifts him above the buttress roots of the tree. Photograph taken on 1st August, 1949; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

8. After the felling: secondary jungle (*damun*) drying in the sun. Photograph taken on 28th July, 1949, Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

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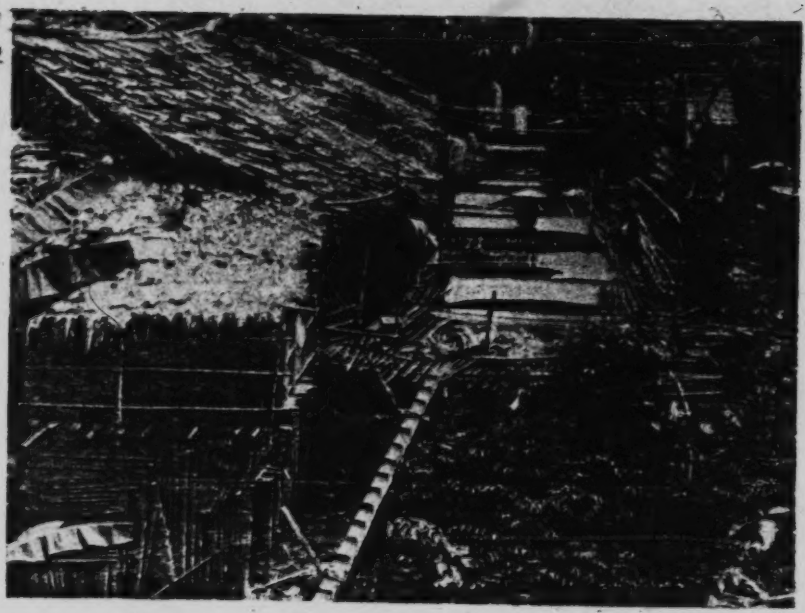

Plate 3. An Iban *dampa* or subsidiary long-house.

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Plate 4. An Iban long-house surrounded by farm clearings, Sungai Bangit, Kapit District.

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Plate 5. An Iban *padi* farm bordered by a grove of sago palms, Sungai Tiau Kapit District.

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Plate 6. An Iban farm house (*dampa*) with secondary jungle (*damun*) in the background.

2: Howell M-5 (ca. 1908) 1908-1910
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No. V —Dyak Custom when building a New house.

By the Revd. Wm. Howell.

000 It is not uncommon among uncivilized races, whose lives are influenced or rather haunted by superstitions of various kinds, to find the majority are in the habit of continually removing from place to place. For more than half a dozen reasons they desert their houses, even when only just finished. The terror of death or that some misfortune might befall their yearly crop of paddy, or the revelation of certain bad omens or ill visions, are the principal causes that will determine them promptly to leave their houses. Of course, we allow an exception to every rule, and there are cases when they have been known to continue living in ruins. These kinds of houses are pronounced to be *chelap*, *i. e.*, the inmates have enjoyed good health, the crop of paddy has been always good, no deaths have occurred excepting old people and those whose illnesses have been of long standing.

621 A Dyak house really is a village. It is comprised of several families building together under one roof.
622 There is a chief in every house or village who rules his followers with fatherly tenderness. The position of a chief is most honourable but most difficult to fill. His influence is just as great as his expenses. His room is generally in the centre of the house or village, and he lays the foundation of the house or village first. He is responsible for all visitors and entertains them.

342 Dyak houses or villages differ in size or rather in length according to the number of doors or families that build together under the same roof. It is almost generally the case to find all those living in the same house related to each other. When we talk of Dyaks building a new house, we understand that they are undertaking a more important task than building a house, it is a village they are building.

623 The chief assembles all his followers at a certain time in the evening in his *ruai* or reception room.
342 Mats are spread, chewing ingredients in profusion and *tuak* or home made toddy are placed in the centre. All the men sit in a circle with the women and children behind them. The chief opens the meeting after the distribution of the *tuak*. The subject is generally well discussed and everybody gives his opinion. At such a meeting the chief has to be most careful. Although his words carry weight, yet he has to go by the votes of the majority. It is, in fact, a sort of parliament, and the debates last a long time. Those who cannot agree with the final arrangement cut

623 342 themselves off and join another house or village. In consequence the size or length of a Dyak house is not limited. To maintain the size of his house a chief has to exercise a great deal of self-denial. He is like a parent who has to make peace among his children and please them equally. His family must share his sympathy.

342 [787] The day following the meeting all the men go out to examine the spot for the site of the house. If it be a good one they *beburong* it at once, *i. e.* they go to hear the cry of a certain bird which prognosticates health, fortune, and good luck. As soon as the good omen is obtained they cut a piece of wood and hang it on the spot where the house is [778] to stand. The spot thereby is considered sacred, being guarded by the *Kayu burong* which is hung thereon.

As soon as the site of the house is cleared they *beramu*, *i. e.* go to get material for the house. The site for the house must not be burnt; jungle that is cut down is cast aside. If the site for the house is burnt it will give less work than in carrying away the jungle that is cut down, but the house is said to be *angat*, *i. e.* it will be visited by plagues and sicknesses. A convenient place is selected for the *palan*. The *palan* is the place for retreat in case of hearing a bad omen when cutting material for the house. Out of every kind of material collected for the building, one piece is cast aside to *ninggang burong*, *i. e.* to plead excuse in case of having neglected bad omens.

The building is done in common as far as putting up the posts and frame-work are concerned. The posts and frame-work are done in a day. It is called *ngentak rumah*. One door a day is put up. It is [283 824] hurried through and every thing is bound by *rotan* or the monkey-cup creeper called *entuyut*. If there be the slightest shower of rain the work is knocked off. To work in the rain when building a new house is to proguosticate the shedding of tears over some misfortune. The *ngentak rumah* begins in the morning and the work is supposed to be finished by one o'clock at midday.

[p. 16]

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The evening before the *ngentak rumah*, they *ngelangkar*, *i. e.* lay the foundation and arrange where the posts are to be. Nearly everybody goes to the site of the new building, men, women, and children, to beat their musical instruments. The noise is most deafening with the intention to avoid hearing a bad omen. A piece of bamboo about a span long is put into the ground on the site of the building and filled with water up to the brim. This ceremony of divination is called *betenong ai*, which prognosticates good or bad luck with reference to their yearly crops of paddy during the whole time they occupy the new house. If the water in the bamboo decreases considerably it indicates perpetual famine, and if it does not, it foretells good years to come.

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623

Before the *ngentak rumah* another meeting is held by the chief. This meeting is simply to arrange the situation of each person's door. The nearer they are related the nearer they build to one another. The first day of the *ngentak rumah* is an important and memorable one. A great sacrifice to *Pulang Gana* is offered for a propitiation, he being the god of the earth. A full grown pig is sacrified and it's blood is smeared on the middle post of the house and the carcase is eaten. *Makai di ruai* is the topic of conversation during the *ngentak rumah*, it signifies eating and feasting together on the verandah of their house. This feasting after a spell of hard work is a welcome relaxation for them all. At the *ngentak rumah*, while the men are hard at work, all the women and children who are not engaged in preparing the midday repast beat the different musical instruments to deafen their ears against an ill omen.

[787]

[p. 17]

342 With some tribes the custom differs a little, the
184 blood of the sacrificed pig is made to run into the hole of the central post of the house.

It is an understood thing that the chief supplies
342 the pig, and the pig that is killed is also a pledge
622 between the chief and his followers. It is hereafter called a *penti* or compensation to be made over to the chief whenever any of his followers leave him.

[p. 18]

2: Howell M-5 (ca. 1908) 1908-1910
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No. VI.—The Dyak Feast called "Mandi Rumah."

By the Revd. Wm. Howell.

342 When a new house has been taken possession of by it's future inmates, certain ceremonies must be gone through to make it habitable, such as the rite making it lawful for the house to receive food for it's inhabitants. But the rite of *mandi rumah* (house washing) may be deferred, although the house must be under certain restrictions until it has been performed.

342 783 *Mandi rumah* literally translated is 'to bathe the house.' Yet the term is more common than the more exact phrase *masu rumah* 'to wash the house.' *Muai rumah* (lit. to abolish the house) is also used as the name of this feast, having reference to the abolishing of restrictions by it's observance.

It is hard to say what was the original significance of this observance, for nothing but the name implies anything about washing, the ceremony as now performed having nothing to suggest it. Perhaps, however, there is a hint of the original idea remaining in the restriction that prevents anyone polluting the water of the bathing and watering place, by fishing [226] with the aid of *tuba* (poisonous roots) which is thrown into the water to stupify the fish or kill them, before the *masu rumah*.

Again, if, as the name implies, a cleansing of the house is meant it is difficult to divine it's purpose. The washing of an old house might signify the purging of some stain of guilt attaching to it or it's inmates, but in the case of a new house it seems to imply a sort of consecration to good purposes, and the formal renunciation of all that is accounted by Dyak custom immoral.

342 It's actual present significance to the Dyak does not seem to go beyond the observance of a custom made binding by tradition, and made desirable enough by the irksomeness of restrictions that tradition also enjoins until the *mandi rumah* has been duly observed. And these restrictions are irksome enough.

342 The Dyaks, having no separate buildings for courts
688 of justice, workshops, factories or the like, transact
784 all business and perform all indoor labour within the house they live in, where the *ruai* or broad covered verandah affords ample space. But until the *mandi rumah*, no court may be held in it by the chief for the settlement of disputes; fines, if imposed, may not be paid; wearing and the making of blankets from bark *(tekalong)* are prohibited. Any person violating any of these rules must incur a penalty, which takes the form of a sacrifice, to avert the misfortune resulting from such offence which would fall upon the inmates. This condition of things prevails until the *mandi rumah*.

342 Now to consider the feast itself, to which the
527 Dyaks commonly add other ceremonies to save the expense that separate observance would entail.

It is generally held after a good harvest, preparation having been in hand for two or three months. When the time draws near "a promise of three days" (to borrow Dyak phraseology) is made.

The first day is devoted to *beban tangga* (making the ladder for the house). The second day is occupied in the cooking of *piring*, *i. e.* offerings that are to be made to the gods at the feast. Invitations are sent out, fighting cocks are set, and on the third day the feast commences. Three rites properly belong to the feast, namely; (1) *beban tangga*, 'the making of the ladder,' (2) *mangkong tiang*, 'striking the post,' and (3) *ngiga igi engkuni*, 'seeking the
342 seed of the *engkuni* tree,' which is used as a charm.
527 Now to consider these rites in detail.
782 When all the guests, who include all the men of importance in the neighbourhood, arrive they are

[p. 20]

342 527 782 received with great ceremony and a pig is sacrificed for them, or a libation made of their home-made toddy. This is by way of an offering to their patron saints or gods. The opening ceremony is *miring ka tangga*, (the offering to the ladder). As soon as the new ladder is placed in position, Pulang Gana and other gods are propitiated by an offering, which is hung underneath the ladder, and the sacrifice of a pig. An old man then recites as follows:—

"But thou art the heart of iron wood,"
"Let the Malays, the Chinese, the Europeans
"Come up, and bring with them brass-ware,
"As *gongs*, *tetawak*, and *bebendai*,
"Let their merchandise be cheap, etc."

The second ceremony is *mangkong tiang*. The same old man enters the room of the chief of the house first to perform the rite. Another offering is prepared in the room, and is placed on the shelf of the kitchen for Pulang Gana, the god of the earth.

The old chanter then strikes a post of the house with a bamboo containing *pulut* (rice ready cooked) meanwhile reciting this incantation:—

"Thou art not a common bamboo,
"Thou art the heart of iron wood,
"Be thou a supporter to fill the paddy bin
"And cause the Malays, the Chinese, the Europeans,
"To come and buy paddy, and help us O Pulang Gana.

The chanter must repeat the ceremony in every room, and if the house be a long one, a great part of the day will have slipped by ere the drowsy old man, now an object of mirth and laughter, has finished his task.

In the *ruai* or reception room of the house the professional reciters are deeply engaged with their incantation called *pengap* to look for *igi engkuni*. It is a long recitation (and is done at the top of their voices) to implore the father of Nendak to descend from above and give them the *igi engkuni*. *Apai*, or the father of Nendak, when he comes down puts the *igi engkuni* in the *engkuni* post and it is taken from there. The incantation begins from four in the afternoon and goes on till daylight the next day.

342 527 The feast lasts a day and a night and the house or village is generally quite full. The confusion and the noise are so great that it requires a good writer to describe it. At the approach of daylight much stir is made, when *Apai Nendak*, *Pulang Gana*, and the rest of the gods are supposed to arrive at the feast. Offerings are made to them and the musical instruments are struck louder and with more vigour. Shouting and laughter, the crowing of cocks and dogs fighting all about the place are enough to drive any one mad. Such is this religious feast of the Dyaks.

6: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

further, these apartments, although joined one to the other architecturally, are always the separate abodes of distinct and autonomous family groups. Indeed, the only parts of the whole long-house which are held in any sort of common ownership are the entry ladders; for the rest, every pile and every plank is privately owned by one of the community's component families. In a sense, then, the singular architecture of an Iban long-house is deceptive, for its gallery and its unbroken expanse of roof tend to cloak the fact that it is made up of a series of separate apartments, each of which is the property of a sovereign family group.

Among the various families which make up a long-house community there does always exist a network of relationships based on bilateral kinship. Thus, every family is always related cognatically to at least one of the other families of the community, usually to several, and quite often to many of them. However, it rarely, if ever, occurs that there is within a long-house community a degree of complete, or even nearly complete, inter-relatedness among its various family groups. Furthermore, an Iban long-house community is an open and not a closed group, for its component family groups are joined in free association from which withdrawal is always possible, and there is, indeed, a good deal of movement, year by year, from one long-house to another. As all this suggests, an Iban long-house community is a corporate group only in certain restricted ways. Thus a long-house community holds virtually no property in common ownership, nor is there collective ownership of farm land; and again, there is an absence of any kind of economic activity by the long-house as a corporate group. However, membership of a long-house does impose upon each family group many common duties and obligations, for it is universally accepted that the well-being of any long-house is dependent upon its ritual state, and for the maintaining of this all are responsible. In jural matters also the long-house community is a corporate entity, for all its family groups do place themselves under the jurisdiction of their *tuai rumah*, or house headman, whose principal duty is the safeguarding and administering of the customary law, or *adat*.

As these summary remarks suggest, the Iban long-house community, as such, presents a number of sociological problems of extraordinary interest. These problems I hope, in due time, to discuss, but in the present essay our attention will be confined to the independent family cells of which every long-house community is composed. Of these it may be claimed that they are the intrinsic and irreducible corporate groups of Iban society, and certainly, an understanding of them is an essential preliminary to the study of the wider structure of Iban society.

6: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

THE FAMILY SYSTEM OF THE IBAN OF BORNEO

THE FAMILY APARTMENT

While they may vary slightly in width, all of the separate family apartments of an Iban long-house are basically similar in construction. Each apartment always consists of a single walled room (with an attic above it), a section of the roofed gallery, and a division of the open platform which fronts the whole house. Of these, the walled room or *bilek* is by far the most important. First and foremost the *bilek* is the family parlour: the normal location for cooking, eating, sleeping, and a host of domestic tasks. But not only is the *bilek* the setting for a family's mundane life, it is also the place where all of its valued heirloom property is displayed or stored. At the back of each parlour stands the family's collection of *tajau*—massive pottery jars, usually of Chinese manufacture, one or other of which, because of its great age, may have become an object of religious veneration. Stacked in the corners or suspended from the side walls is the family's bronze ware: gongs of many shapes and sizes, trays and boxes for use in the ceremony of betel chewing, and perhaps a Malay cannon or two. Other family possessions, less durable and more rarely used, resplendent *ikat* fabrics, the silver jewellery and bead garments of the women, the feather head-dresses and traditional accoutrements of the men, are securely stored away and only brought out on ritual or gala occasions. All of these valuables make up an important part of the family estate.

Ranged along the back of the long-house, then, are a series of family rooms, each divided from its neighbour by a side wall of planks or bark. Each of these rooms is connected by a hinged door (which may be barred from within) to the great gallery (*ruai*) of the long-house, which serves as a kind of general thoroughfare and is the principal venue of the community's social and ritual life. Of this gallery each family possesses its own section, and although the whole of the *ruai* is ordinarily open to all members of the long-house, each family retains the prescriptive right to cordon off its own part whenever, for ritual reasons, the need arises. Here and there, in about the centre of the *ruai*, in smoke-blackened clusters, hang the trophy heads or *antu pala*, with which so many of the most cherished values and beliefs of the Iban are associated. But each cluster is always the private property of the family on whose section of the gallery it hangs, for trophy heads are never owned by the long-house as a whole.

From each family division of the gallery an opening gives access to the open platform, or *tanju*, which like the *ruai* runs from end to end of the long-house, providing a space where rice may be sunned and garments dried. Of this platform, too, each family possesses its own portion.

Each family then, owns and occupies a single apartment (made up of a *bilek*, a *ruai*, and a *tanju*), and it is the joining together of a series of these

6: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

342 distinct apartments that produces the attenuated structure known as a long-house. In other words, a long-house is, in essence, a 'village' consisting of a single terrace of attached houses.

592 596 In government and other publications the family apartments of an Iban long-house are commonly referred to as 'doors'. A long-house, that is, is referred to as consisting of ten doors, twenty doors, or whatever the number may be. This method of description has the advantage that it may be applied to any of the indigenous peoples of Borneo that live in long-houses; but in this essay—which is concerned exclusively with the Iban—I propose to employ the term *bilek*. As we have seen, *bilek* is the word which the Iban use to describe the separate enclosed rooms of a long-house, but it is also the term used, by the Iban themselves, to refer to the family group which owns and occupies one apartment of a long-house, as—for example—in the phrases: '*Nya prau kami se bilek*' ('That is the canoe of our *bilek*, or family'), and '*Kami se bilek tabin magang*' ('We, of this *bilek* family, are all ill'). The family group denoted in the phrase '*kami se bilek*'[4] ('we, the members of a *bilek*') is the basic unit of Iban social and economic organization. In the discussion that follows, I shall refer to this unit as the *bilek* family.

The members of a *bilek* family are always intimately related by ties of kinship and affinity, but it is a unit which is primarily defined by the criterion of local residence. Its members—as a group—own and occupy one, and only one, of the separate apartments of a long-house, consisting, as already described, of a walled room, a section of roofed gallery and of open platform. A *bilek* family is always, therefore, a local group.

Further, the *bilek* family is always a domestic family; that is, its members constitute a single household, and each household subsists as an autonomous unit. Food is prepared and cooked for the *bilek* family as a whole, and its members eat together, sharing a common meal. The *bilek* family is also an allodial unit, possessing both land and property in its own right. Thus, a *bilek* family always owns tracts of rice-land, in various parts of the hilly terrain surrounding the long-house, over which it has established rights by the felling of virgin jungle. And, if the settlement be an old one, each family will also possess scattered clumps of durian and other fruit trees, thickets of rattan, and perhaps a small rubber plantation. Again, in addition to its dug-out canoe, its domestic and agricultural tools and paraphernalia, each family will always have its own assemblage of *tajau*, *tawak* and other heirloom valuables. Similarly, each *bilek* family is an independent entity economically, cultivating its own hill rice, growing or collecting a wide range of supplementary food crops, and producing—as best it can—all the other necessaries of existence. Ritually too, each *bilek* family is a disparate unit with its own magical charms (*pengaroh*), its own set of ritual prohibitions (*pemali*), and its own special kind of sacred rice (*padi pun*). Finally, almost all of the *gawai*

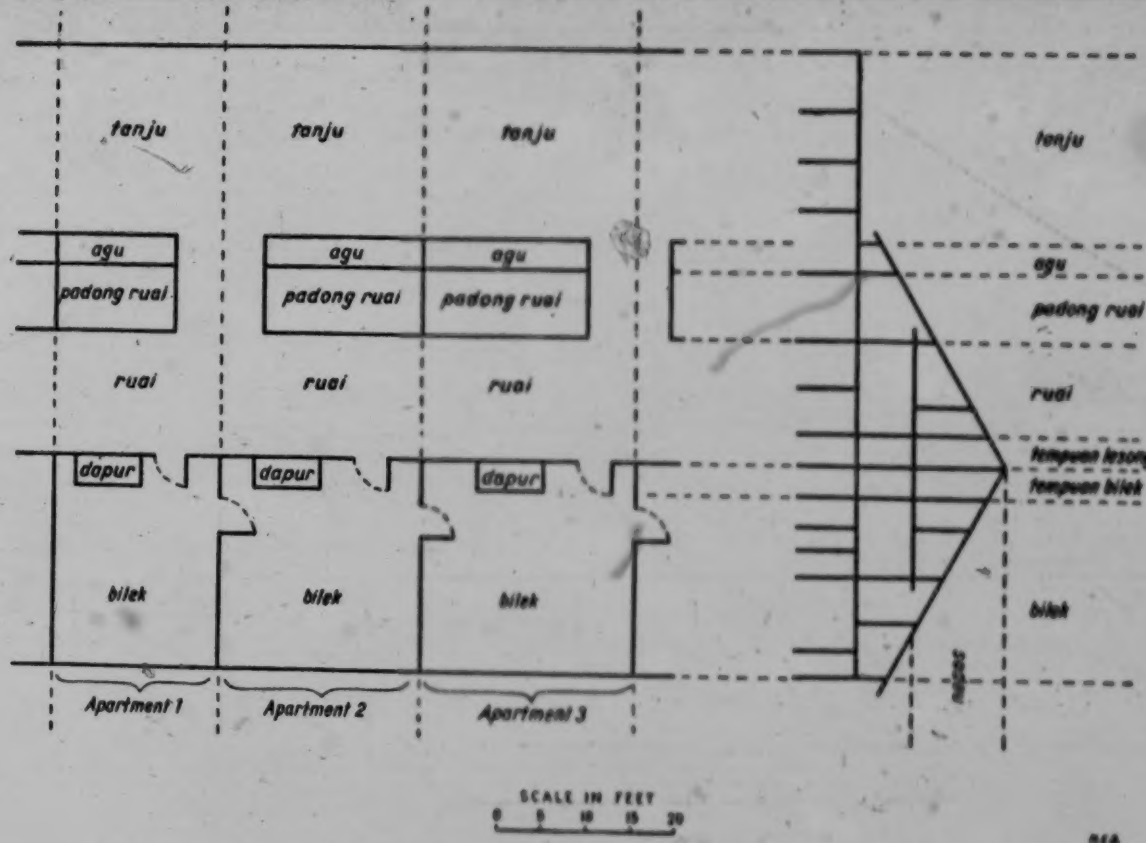

Fig. 2. Plan of an Iban long-house.

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

CHAPTER III

MANNER OF LIFE

Dyak village house—*Tanju*—*Ruai*—*Bilik*—*Sadau*—Human heads—Valuable jars—Paddy-planting—Men's work—Women's work—House-building—Boat-building—*Kadjangs*—Dyak tools—*Bliong*—*Duku*—Weaving—Plaiting mats and basket-making—Hunting—Traps—Fishing—Spoon-bait—Casting-net—*Tuba*-fishing—Crocodile-catching.

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AMONG the Dyaks a whole village, consisting of some twenty or thirty families, or even more, live together under one roof. This village house is built on piles made of hard wood, which raise the floor from six to twelve feet above the ground. The ascent is made by a notched trunk or log, which serves as a ladder; one is fixed at each end of the house. The length of this house varies according to the number of families inhabiting it; but as the rooms occupied by the different families are built on the same plan and by a combination of labour, the whole presents a uniform and regular appearance.

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The roof and outside walls are thatched with the leaves of the *nipa* palm, which are first made into *attap*. These are made by doubling the leaves over a stick about six feet long, each leaf overlapping the other, and sewn down with split cane or reeds. These *attap* are arranged in rows, each *attap* overlapping the one beneath it, and thus

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

forming a roof which keeps off the rain and sun, and lasts for three or four years.

The long Dyak village house is built in a straight line, and consists of a long uncovered veranda, which is called the *tanju*. The paddy is put on the *tanju* to be dried by the sun before it is pounded to get rid of its husk and convert it into rice. Here also the clothes and a variety of other things are hung out to dry. The family whet-stone and dye vat are kept under the eaves of the roof, and the men sharpen their tools and the women do their dyeing on the *tanju*. The flooring of this part of the house is generally made of *bilian*, or iron-wood, so as to stand exposure to the weather.

Next to the *tanju* comes the covered veranda, or *ruai*. This also stretches the whole length of the house, and the floor is made of bamboo, or *nibong* (a kind of palm), split into laths and tied down with rattan or cane.

This *ruai*, or public hall, is generally about twenty feet wide, and as it stretches the whole length of the house without any partition, it is a cool and pleasant place, and is much frequented by men and women for conversation and indoor pursuits. Here the women often do their work—the weaving of cloth or the plaiting of mats. Here, too, the men chop up the firewood, or even make boats, if not of too great a size. This long *ruai* is a public place open to all comers, and used as a road by travellers, who climb up the ladder at one end, walk through the whole length of the house, and go down the ladder at the other end. The floor is carpeted with thick and heavy mats, made of cane interlaced with narrow strips of beaten bark. Over these are spread other mats of finer texture for visitors to sit upon.

The length of this covered veranda depends upon the

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

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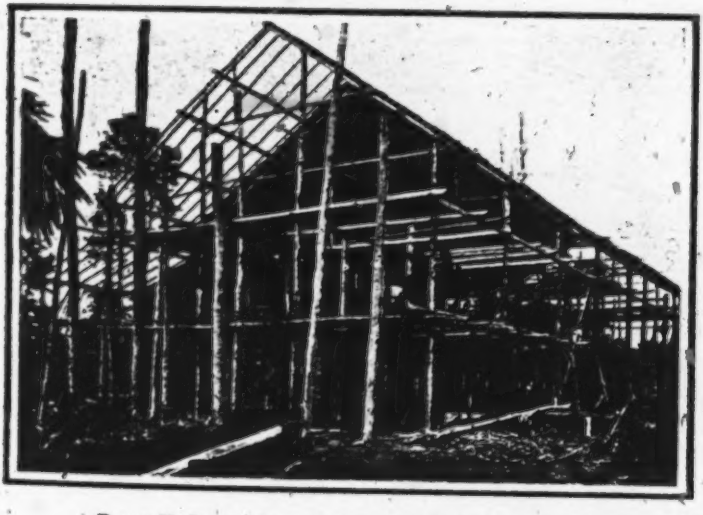
DYAK MAKING A BLOW-PIPE

He is seen here shaping the outside of the blow-pipe. The hole is bored while the wood is about six inches in diameter, and it is then pared down to about two inches.



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DYAK VILLAGE HOUSE IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION

This picture shows the arrangement of pillars and rafters of a Dyak house. The floor nearest the earth is divided into the long open veranda and the rooms in which the different families live. Above this is the loft, where the paddy is stored away. Part of the roof in the picture has been covered with palm-leaf thatch.

[facing p. 44]

7:Gomes, M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

342 number of families living in the house, and these range
361 from three or four to forty or fifty.

354 Each family has its own portion of this *ruai*, and in
512 each there is a small fireplace, which consists of a slab of stone, at which the men warm themselves, when they get up, as they usually do, in the chill of the early morning before the sun has risen.

523 Over this fireplace hangs the most valuable ornament in the eyes of the Dyak, the bunch of human heads. These are the heads obtained when on the warpath by various members of the family—dead and living—and are handed down from father to son as the most precious heirlooms—more precious, indeed, than the ancient jars which the Dyaks prize so highly.

353 The posts in this public covered veranda are often adorned with the horns of deer and the tusks of wild boars—trophies of the chase. The empty sheaths of swords are suspended on these horns or from wooden hooks, while the naked blades are placed in racks overhead.

342 On one side of this long public hall is a row of doors. Each of these leads into a separate room, or *bilik*, which is occupied by a family. The doors open outwards, and each is closed by means of a heavy weight secured to a thong fastened to the inside. If the room be unusually large, it may have two doors for the sake of convenience.

342 This room serves several purposes. It serves as a
354 kitchen, and in one corner there is a fireplace where the food is cooked. This fireplace is set against the wall of the veranda, and resembles an open cupboard. The lowest shelf rests on the floor, and is boarded all round and filled with clay. This forms the fireplace, and is furnished with a few stones upon which the pots are set

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

342 354 for cooking. The shelf immediately above the fireplace is set apart for smoking fish. The shelves above are filled with firewood, which is thoroughly dried by the smoke and ready for use. As the smoke from the wood fire is not conducted through the roof by any kind of chimney, it spreads itself through the loft, and blackens the beams and rafters of the roof.

342 264 352 This room also serves as a dining-room. When the food is cooked, mats are spread here, and the inmates squat on the floor to eat their meal. There is no furniture, the floor serving the double purpose of table and chairs.

342 513 This *bilik* also serves as a bedroom. At night the mats for sleeping on are spread out here, and the mosquito-curtains hung up.

342 354 There is no window to let in the air and light, but a portion of the roof is so constructed that it can be raised a foot or two, and kept open by means of a stick.

353 523 Round the three sides of this room are ranged the treasured valuables of the Dyaks—old jars, some of which are of great value, and brass gongs, and guns. Their cups and plates are hung up in rows flat against the walls. The flooring is the same as that of the veranda, and is made of split palm or bamboo tied down with cane.

356 The floor is swept after a fashion, the refuse falling through the flooring to the ground underneath. But the room is stuffy, and not such a pleasant place as the

231 open veranda. The pigs and poultry occupy the waste space under the house.

342 417 373 From the *bilik* there is a ladder which leads to an upper room, or loft (*sadau*), where they keep their tools and store their paddy. If the family be a large one, the young unmarried girls sleep in this loft, the boys and young men sleeping outside in the veranda.

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

their pestles in quick succession at one mortar. In this way the grain is freed from husk, and is made ready for food.

Each family farms its own piece of land. Much of such work as cutting down the jungle and planting is done by a combination of labour, several families agreeing to work for each other in turn. By this means all the planting on the land belonging to a particular family is done in one day, and all the grain ripens at the same time.

When the Dyaks wish to abandon an old habitation in favour of a new one, a general meeting of the inhabitants is held to consider the matter, and the desirability of building a new house is fully discussed. Sometimes it happens that some families do not agree with the wishes of the majority, and these families split off and join another house. If a move be decided on, a few experienced men are deputed to choose a site, and to report on its adaptability. There are several matters to be taken into account. The site must be for preference on rising ground, and be near a good supply of water. There must also be some jungle near, where the inmates can get their firewood, and there must be large tracts of land not far away where they can plant their paddy.

When the new house has to be built on the low-lying, marshy ground in the lower reaches of the river, the choice is not difficult. All that is necessary is to choose a part of the river where the current is not very strong. But in the hill country it is not easy to find a site where the ground is fairly level, and can accommodate a large house of thirty or forty families.

Before building on the chosen site the omen birds are consulted. If the omens be favourable, all the men and

7;Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

342 lads turn out immediately with axes and choppers to cut down the trees of the jungle, which are then left to dry. [622] Another meeting is then held to decide who is to be the *tuai*, or headman of the new house, and to settle the size and the sequence of the rooms. The next move is to appoint a time for all the people to meet at the site of the new village. The ground is then cleared. [777] All the timber is carried off, as it is considered unfortunate to burn it. The ground is measured out for the different rooms belonging to the different families, and pegs are put in where the posts have to stand. A piece of bamboo is then stuck in the ground, filled with water and covered with leaves. A spear and a shield are placed beside it, and the whole is surrounded by a wooden rail. The rail is to prevent the bamboo from being upset by wild animals, and the weapons are to warn strangers not to touch it. A few people remain to keep watch, and to make a great deal of noise with brass gongs and drums to frighten away the evil spirits. If in the early morning they find there is much evaporation, the place is considered unhealthy, and is abandoned. If all be well, the building of the house is begun. [783] Each family must kill a fowl or a pig before the holes for the posts can be dug, and the blood must be smeared on the sharpened ends and sprinkled on the posts to propitiate Pulang Gana, the tutelary deity of the earth. They begin by making the holes for the headman's quarters, and then work simultaneously to left and right of it. The posts, of which there are a great number, are about twelve inches or less in diameter, and are of bilian or other hard wood so as not to rot in the earth. A hole four feet deep is made to receive each post. 342 787 They must be planted carefully and firmly, for if one were to give way subsequently it would

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

342 [787]

be regarded as foreboding evil, and the house would have to be abandoned and a new house built.

[476]

All the men combine to labour collectively until the skeleton of the house is complete, and then every family turns its attention to its own apartments. During the building of the house, there is a great deal of striking of gongs and other noisy instruments to prevent any birds of ill omen being heard. I have sometimes argued with the Dyaks that if the warnings of the birds are to be trusted, then why make so much noise to prevent hearing them? The Dyak's reply to this was that as long as they did not hear the warning, the spirits would not be displeased at their not regarding it; so to spare themselves the trouble of choosing another site and building another house, they make so much noise as to drown the cries of any birds.

342 811

342

When the building is sufficiently advanced to receive the inmates, they pack up their possessions and convey them to the house, halting on the way till they have heard some favourable omen, after which they proceed joyfully. Their belongings must not be moved into the house before themselves, but must be taken with them when they move into the new house.

462 396

House-building is considered the work of the men, and another important work the men have to do is the making of boats. These are of all sizes, from the dug-out canoe twelve feet long to the long war-boat eighty to ninety feet in length.

396

The ordinary boats of the Dyaks are cut out of a single log. Some of my schoolboys, under the guidance of the native schoolmaster, once made a small canoe for their own use, so I saw the whole process. A tree having a round straight stem was felled, and the desired length of trunk cut off. The outside was then shaped with the

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

As far as is yet
known of the products, gold is not one of them, nor 135
have I seen specimens of any other metals which have
been extracted from their soil. Small paths intersect 619
the forests between the villages of all the Sakarran and [487]
Sarebas tribes, so that a constant communication is
easily kept up, and as their practices and interests are
identical, the good understanding which has long
existed between these powerful tribes of savages is
likely to be maintained, as they probably very well
know that a quarrel between them would only end in
the ruin of both, their enemies being so numerous, and
anxious to revenge upon them the many injuries they
have sustained at their hands.

Though the Dyaks generally build their villages near 361
the river for the convenience of launching their boats,
there are many of them situated so high towards the
sources of the streams as to be unnavigable from the
rapids; the people inhabiting such join the boats belong-
ing to some village situated lower down, and are thus
enabled to participate in their piratical practices. The
villages of the sea Dyaks are formed upon one plan,
the houses being, if the tribe be small—that is to say, of
about sixty families—all collected under one roof. Each 342
house has its separate door, which opens into a broad
verandah covered in by a continuation of the pitch of
the roof, and which answers all the purposes of a
street, being floored with laths of bamboo or nibong,
and on a level with the flooring of the houses. One
terrace of such buildings is often 500 or 600 fe

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

342 in length, and the houses being built on very strong posts with wooden sides, and covered with atap, they present frequently a neater and more comfortable appearance than the frequently ruinous houses of the Malays. Besides the door opening into the verandah, they have on each side of their dwellings, which consist only of one room, a door communicating with the residence of the next family, so that, if it were an advantage, a person could traverse the whole length of the terrace without appearing on the verandah at all. The windows of their houses are part of the roof, which, in the construction of the house, has been separated for that purpose; it is raised and supported open by a notched bamboo or other stick, and when shut is undistinguishable from the rest of the roof. The ataps composing the thatch are not each tied to the rafters, but being bound into large sheets are secured only in a few places, so that in case of fire, by the few fastenings being cut, they are easily slid from the steep sloping roof, and prevented from adding fuel to the, without them, too inflammable dwellings.

342 462 The large covered shed or verandah above described is the place where all the in-door occupations of the men and women are carried on, and when not engaged in out-door occupations, they may be all seen here together pursuing their varied avocations; the men in preparing weapons of the chase or war, or instruments of agriculture, the women in cleaning rice from the husk, making mats, baskets, &c. As the inhabitants

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

of the different villages combine to repair or rebuild them all at the same time, their houses and terraces have always an uniform appearance, and are all of the same size. In the interior arrangements of their houses the fire-places, of which there are two, are placed on each side of the principal entrance; each is formed of a kind of shallow box, or framework, of strong pieces of wood filled with clay; this is supported on strong wooden posts reaching through the flooring to the ground, and extending to the top of the house. On the clay are four or five stones of a convenient size, which serve for sustaining the cooking pot over the fire, which is placed in the space left between them, and is always of wood, a large supply of which, split and ready, is always kept dry on another framework above the fire-place, and supported by the same posts. This it is the duty of the women constantly to replenish from the trees which have been felled in clearing the ground, and which are strewed abundantly all over their farms. As the roofs are high in the centre, and slope at a sharp angle, much room in the top of the house is rendered available by the Dyaks, who erect another flooring over the one they constantly use; thus they have a large and useful loft where they stow their baskets, mats, and implements of agriculture during the season they are not in use. As may be supposed, people in their state of barbarity have little need of furniture, which for the most part is used to administer to the purposes of luxury.

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847), 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

of luxury. The Dyaks eat their food from the ground for a table; each having taken a portion of rice which he considers sufficient for him, this, if he be not provided with a plate, which many of them are, is placed upon a clean leaf of the Dillenia speciosa, and he dips his hand into the common stock of salt which is placed in the centre of the group. If they have flesh to their repast it is partaken of in a similar manner to the salt. They never drink during their meal, but on rising wash their hands and mouths, and afterwards take a draught of water from the bamboos, which are always kept full near the fire-place. Though they eat from the ground or floor of their houses, they rarely sit cross-legged upon it like the Malays, but have each a small block of wood about three inches in thickness, which they use as a seat by day and a pillow by night.

Around the walls of the apartment hang the gongs and other musical instruments, and such portions of their dress as they do not happen to be using, together with their spears, shields, and instruments of war. One side of the house always contains a rack, in which are placed the naked swords of the family, the sheaths hanging by their side. The doors of their houses are protected on the inside by a bar, but as pilfering is rare amongst these people, it is perhaps more to prevent intrusion when they wish for privacy, than as a protection against robbers. This is rendered evident by the doors, which cannot be fas-

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

tened on the outside, being closed when they are at their farms by the mortar in which their rice is cleaned, and which always stands outside the door in the verandah, or some other heavy piece of wood being merely placed against it. The whole of their buildings, though of so substantial and good appearance, are formed and fastened together without the assistance of nails, their place being supplied by rattans and other cordage.

The language of the sea Dyaks, though altogether different in such parts as having not been adopted from the Malay, is merely a less refined dialect of the language spoken over all Polynesia, and its connexion with that of the other wild tribes, particularly those of Sumatra, is easily to be traced. It is not nearly so melodious in sound, or so copious in its extent, as the Malay, though the Dyaks do not scruple to extend it by adding foreign words whenever they find it necessary, so that a great portion of the words of their vocabulary are from the Malay: the intercourse, which has been generally friendly, between the two nations has also encouraged this adoption of foreign terms. Specimens of their language are given in the work of Captain Keppel, from the vocabularies of Mr. Brooke, and as I can vouch for their correctness, it is not necessary to repeat them here. The different tribes into which the sea division of the Dyaks is again separated have each dialects, which differ in a trifling measure from that generally spoken, but as far as I

3: Low G-5 (1844 1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

842 return of such as have been carried into slavery. Mr. Brooke has been the means of restoring many of those objects of their solicitude by his negociations with the Sakarran and Sarebas Dyaks, although this has not been accomplished without a large pecuniary sacrifice: the gratitude they show for the happiness he has conferred upon them has amply repaid him for his liberality. The girls are equally the objects of the tender care of their parents with the boys; and though, in their prayers, the Dyaks always ask for male children, the females, who are nearly equally useful to them, are not treated with less kindness, and are never neglected. Amongst the sea
342 Dyaks are no houses erected, as of the hill tribes,
884 to be hereafter described, for the reception of the
513 unmarried men; but though they are supposed generally to sleep in the verandah of the village, the interior of the houses is not denied to them.

462 The duties of the women are various and numerous; though the whole care of the house devolves
512 upon them, they are not exempted from participation in the labours of the field. They always rise before day-break, and, if it be the season, accompany their husbands to the farm, carrying with them their breakfast of rice which has been previously cooked; but as they generally have a hut at the farm, they often cook their rice there. Their labours of husbandry consist in clearing away the brushwood, while the men fell the larger trees, in sowing their padi

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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the flesh of animals, as amongst the inland tribes. Nearly all the beasts of the forest are eaten by these people, even monkeys, alligators (if small), snakes and other reptiles are esteemed. Like the French, they regard frogs as a delicate dish, and bestow considerable pains in procuring them: their rice is cooked in brass or earthen pots, called priuks, which they purchase from the Malays; and plates of English manufacture have recently become very general among them. They eat from the plates with their right hand, compressing the rice (which is not cooked dry as that of the Malays) into a ball of convenient size. They know no way of cooking flesh but by boiling it, which they do in bamboos, having previously cut the whole animal into small pieces.

I once saw some Dyaks roasting a monkey, but did not stay to observe whether they did not boil it afterwards, as they generally partially roast these animals to free them from the hair. They have very little idea of flavouring their food except with salt, though they sometimes employ chilis, or small capsicums, turmeric, and ginger for that purpose. The Sebooyohs, who have lived more intimately with the Malays than the other tribes, have very much improved upon their cooking, the methods having been copied from their Mahometan neighbours. As they have no occasion for fire except for the purposes of cooking, their houses have no chimney, and the little smoke which is created finds its way through

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

the crevices of the roof; and, as they rarely, with the exception of the Sebooyohs, who affect Malayan habits, indulge in the luxury of mosquito curtains, the smoke is rather beneficial than otherwise, as it protects them in some measure from the attacks of these tormenting insects, which, though not numerous in the interior, are, with sand-flies, very abundant on the sea-shore. They generally carry with them in their tambuk a flint and steel, for the purpose of making fire; but should these not be with them, but little difficulty is experienced in obtaining it from two pieces of bamboo, or by friction of a hard and soft stick, the latter of which soon takes fire.

The whole of the sea tribes dispose of their dead by burial, which, together with their not abstaining from the flesh of animals, induces me to suppose that the Hindu religion never influenced them, as it evidently has the land tribes; or that, if they knew any thing of its institutions, the impressions having been less strong have been by time altogether removed. A person having died, the manang, or doctor, who has been in attendance during the sickness, has also the superintendence of the interment, and the grave being prepared, the body of the deceased, dressed in his finest apparel, is placed in it, together with his sword, spear, gongs, and other property: if the family has been rich, the ornaments of gold and silver are added, and frequently a sum of money, amounting to forty or fifty dollars, in addition, and the earth covers the whole.

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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Indian corn, or maize, as it is frequently called in Europe, is planted sparingly at the same time; and as it is ripe and off the ground in three months from the time of sowing, it does not injure the padi, amongst the rows of which it is sown; and as it comes in at a season when the rice is getting exhausted, and the second crop not ready, it is of great use to the Dyaks, though not so much esteemed as rice as an article of food. On the larger collections of ashes they also sow the seeds of gourds, pumpkins, a kind of melon without flavour, and cucumbers, of which they are very fond. These trail along the ground amongst the stems of the padi, to which they appear to do no injury, and continue bearing for some time after the rice crop has been gathered in.

After the field has been all planted, the Dyak and his family occupy themselves in building a hut on some elevated position in the field, for the convenience of being able to reside at it constantly during the periods when it most requires their care, and for storing the harvest when ripe from the rain, until they can carry it to their granaries, which are generally near, but apart from the houses of the village. The 'dañgau,' as this hut is called, is always upon posts, and with a raised but not covered platform before it, for the convenience of drying the padi before it is placed in the baskets in which it is to be conveyed to the granary. During its growth the field is always weeded twice: this, as they are assisted by no tools, with the exception of their parang,

5 Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 OC6 Iban OC6

injure the paddy, amongst the rows of which it is sown; and as it comes in at a season when the rice with some is getting exhausted, and the second crop is not ready, it is of great use to the Dyaks, though not so much esteemed as rice as an article of food. On the larger collection of ashes they also sow the seeds of gourds (*gerrok*), pumpkins (*entekai*), a kind of melon without flavour (*junggat*, *kundu*), and cucumbers (*rampu*), of which they are very fond. These trail along the ground amongst the stems of the paddy, to which they appear to do no injury, and continue bearing for some time after the rice-crop has been gathered in. A small quantity of *pulut* is also grown by every family. It is a fine strong growing kind of paddy, but when cleaned and boiled is of a peculiar clammy nature. It bears a higher price than any other kind in the market, and is always eaten by the Dyaks cooked in green bamboos, as it is thought that the ordinary metal cooking pot spoils the flavour. The farm is tabued during the *tugal*.

After the seed has been sown, it is the business of the men to plant a fence (*raja*) round the farm to protect it from the inroads of wild animals such as pig and deer; this should not occupy much time, as the material is ready to hand, having been collected for the purpose previous to the burning, from the *débris* scattered on the ground.

There are many things which sorely try the patience of the Dyaks as they watch with unflagging interest the growth of their crops. It is true the pigs and deer are excluded by means of the wooden fence, but nothing short of the most untiring vigilance, and not always even that, can keep out the numerous climbing and winged pests, such as monkeys, squirrels, rats, and sparrows, some of which are sure to visit the farm as the paddy is ripening. Their sole remedy, such as it is, is to give a feast and propitiate the spirits in the usual manner. A miniature junk is built and filled with delicate morsels, the plagues are then besought to embark for some other country, and the toy is set adrift to float out to sea with the outward tide. During this ceremony the village is tabued for seven days in the same manner as is done when the purification for burning is performed.

The next thing is to build a *langkau* or farm house on some commanding or central situation where the family may reside without inconvenience off and on or altogether just as they please until the harvest is over. They have still weary duties to perform before they can hope to reap the fruit of their toil; but it too often happens that these are left to the women and children, while the able-bodied men seek other and more congenial occupation, *i.e.*, either follow a war-path, or journey

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban CC6

as the various houses are built according to a single scale and measurement and by a combination of labour, they rarely fail to present a uniform and regular appearance.[1]

There is always a ladder at either end of the terrace by which to ascend and sometimes one or more towards the centre of the *tanju* or open air-platform. The roof is thatched throughout with the same material—shingles or palm leaves—if the latter the *nipa* (*daun apong*) leaves are used where procurable, and where not (*daunbira*) the *pandanus*. The flooring in some villages is made of palm trees split into laths (*nibong* = wild varieties of the *areca*); in other cases of cane or bamboo or even twigs. The laths of split bamboo allow a delicious current of air to permeate the apartment. The outer walls are of plank, the inner of bark. No nails are used, the beams or rafters are lashed together with rattans or secured by wooden pegs. The posts are innumerable and of hard wood. The village is surrounded at its base by a wooden palisade which is itself protected by *chevaux de frise* of pointed bamboo. The village is divided by a plank walling into two main portions, the front and the rear. The former partakes of the nature of a very wide verandah and is open throughout its entire length. The latter occupies the rear of the entire building and is sub-divided into apartments, one for each family. Between the plank wall and the edge of the *ruai* is the *tempuan* or footway, a narrow passage running through the centre so that a person may walk from one end of the village to the other without encountering any obstacles.

Every family thus possesses a compact little residence to themselves comprising a *bilich* or room where they can enjoy privacy when they like, a *tempuan* or thoroughfare where they pound their rice and pile up their firewood, a *ruai* or verandah where they receive visitors, a *tanju* or open-air platform where they air their things and lounge in the cool of the evening, and a *sadau* or loft where they keep their tools and store their paddy.

The *bilich* or private apartment is furnished with a swinging door which opens outwards and is closed by means of a heavy weight suspended to a thong to the inside. The door can be secured when required by means of a bar. If the room be unusually large, it may have two doors for the sake of convenience. Figures are sometimes carved or painted on the door—saurians among others, grotesque images of supernatural beings, and indecent caricatures of the human person. There is no window such as we understand, but a portion of the roof is so constructed that it can be raised a foot or two by means of a stick to let

[1] Kiffah houses are packed close together and there are originally three in a row without any intermediate space. The floor is only four feet from the ground, and any one can jump in.

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban OC6

out the smoke or to admit the fresh air. If the neighbours are near relations or intimate friends, as is often the case, a hole is cut in the wall which separates the room to avoid the necessity of a roundabout way into one anothers' apartments, and some villages are so arranged that one can traverse the entire length of the rear section of the building by means of these apertures without appearing on the verandah at all. There is no furniture in the room—none in fact being required. The floor is the occupiers' table and they squat to their meals. But there are plenty of mats to sit upon and baskets to pack their clothes in. Their cups and plates are hung in rows upon the walls as much for ornament as for use. Their valuables, such as old jars, gongs, etc., are ranged on three sides so as to present the most imposing appearance of wealth.

But the room is stuffy and untidy, and no wonder, seeing that there is but one for each family and this one is used as a kitchen as well as a mess room, as a nursery as well as a bed chamber. There can be no absolute privacy unless the door is barred to exclude the neighbours. Boys and girls keep running in and out and the dogs are always on the watch in the *tempuan* to spring in whenever the door swings open. The floor is swept after a fashion but the room is never deserted, and the roof is simply black with soot. The refuse is thrown into the piggery and poultry yard, which occupies the area or waste space under the house. Very little stench, if any, reaches the apartment from the ground, as the floor is raised too high above it to be affected by it. The *dapur* or fire-place is the only real piece of furniture in the room. It is built either to the right or to the left of the door set up against the wall of the *tempuan* and resembles an open cupboard, the lowest shelf resting upon the floor and the upper shelves being of lattice work instead of plank. The former is boarded all round and filled with clay. This is the fireplace and it is furnished with a few stones between which the pots are set. The shelf immediately above the fire is set apart for smoking fish and meat, etc. The shelves above this again are filled with firewood which being thoroughly dried is ready for use. The women, who do all the cooking, have also to keep these shelves supplied from the pile in the *tempuan*. As the smoke from the wood fire is not conducted to the roof by means of a chimney it spreads itself throughout the loft and blackens the beams and rafters until it finds its way out by the open window.[1]

[1] Elsewhere B. L. says: "They make a *palan* or raised platform and, under it light a fire and heap it with dry twigs and fill the platform with split wood for drying as *bekal* (firewood). From the fire they take brands for other fires. They drive three pegs into the ground and place *prion* (jar) on top, fill

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban CC6

The *tempuan* or general thoroughfare is between the *bilieh* and the *ruai*. It is three feet in width and is paved with wood. It is furnished with a ladder or notched stick by which to reach the loft, a family mortar where the women pound their paddy with wooden pestles to free it from the husk, and a pile or two of firewood reared by the men for use inside. This passage is also used by the women to winnow their rice in, feed their dogs, and attend to their chickens, and by the men to wash the dirt off their feet when they come home from their work. The wall of the *tempuan* is sometimes elaborately painted in various patterns, and the spears of the family are thrust into the skirting board so as to be handy.

The *ruai* or verandah is in front of the *tempuan* and is as nearly as possible the same size as the *bilieh* from which it differs principally in being open on all sides and without any partition. It is therefore a cooler and more agreeable place and as such is frequented by both sexes for the purposes of conversation, discussion, and indoor pursuits. Female visitors are usually received in the *bilieh*, but male visitors are invariably received in the *ruai* and only enter the bilieh when invited to do so to be introduced to the women and to share the meals. They sleep in the *ruai* along with the boys and bachelors, and sit there all day when they have nothing better to do, conversing with the head of the family and chewing betel. The floor is carpeted with thick and heavy mats of cane interlaced with narrow strips of beaten bark. Over these are spread other mats of thinner and finer texture. There is a small fireplace between this and the next *ruai* for the men to warm themselves at when they get up, as they usually do, in the chill of the morning, before the sun has risen above the trees; the fire is allowed to go out in the middle of the day, but is revived towards the evening when it is getting dark, but still too early to light the torches.

Some *ruais* are provided with a *panggan* or bedstead with plank sides in one corner of the room for the men to sleep in, but this is not always the case. If the head of the family has made it for his own use and if he be a chief or rich man he will fix his gongs of various kinds around it for the sake of show; his weapons will be within reach and his war dress will hang from the roof where it can be seen to best advantage —a skull cap of wickerwork with its nodding plumes, and a skin jacket decorated with the tail feathers of the war bird of the tribe. But the most valuable ornament in the *ruai* by far is

quarter with rice and fill up with water and when it simmers cover it with leaves. Before the arrival of Europeans the Dyaks used earthen *prions* made by themselves."

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban OC6

But the most valuable ornament in the ruai by far is of course the bunch of human heads which hangs over the fireplace like a bunch of fruit; these are the heads obtained on various warpaths by various members of the family, dead and living, and are handed down from father to son as the most precious heirlooms, more precious even than the ancient jars which they prize so highly. The next ornament of paramount importance is the bag of charms which is fastened to the centrepost and which is in like manner handed down from generation to generation and about which there is a great to do if any of the charms are lost or stolen.[1] Other posts are often adorned with trophies of the chase, horns and such like of deer and wild cattle and the heads of animals such as bears, monkeys, and crocodiles killed by the young boys. The empty sheaths of the swords and knives of the family are suspended on wooden hooks, while the naked blades are placed in racks above their heads.

The *tanju* or open-air platform is in front of the *ruai* and is railed at the edge, but the rail is often so slight that it is unsafe to lean against it. The flooring is usually of ironwood the better to stand exposure to the weather. It is used as a lounge in the evening, the view from it being extensive and the breeze refreshing. While the sun is shining the paddy is put out to dry as are the clothes and a variety of other things. The family whetstone and dye vat are kept here under the eaves of the roof.

The *sadau* or loft is used to stow away the baskets and agricultural instruments during the season they are not in use. The paddy is stowed away here in tubs of bark and also the seed for next year's farm.[2] Young women often sleep here and so do the young men and boys who are unprovided with curtains when the mosquitoes and sandflies are troublesome down below. They burn a fragrant bark to keep off the mosquitoes.

Whenever it is deemed expedient by the Sea Dyaks to shift from one locality to another, or to abandon an old habitation in favour of a new one, a general meeting is convened to consider the proposition and the desirability of the measure is fully discussed.[3] If a move be decided upon a few experienced men

[1] While on the Rejang river "a Kapowit gave me the tusk of a crocodile which devoured his sister, and showed me a boar's tusk which was lost to his family by an uncle who was killed by a Ukiet and to recover which he a few years ago killed the Ukiet. He showed me another tusk which was dropped by one of the boars which attacked and destroyed the house of an ancestor living at Lakut." Articles like these appear to constitute their charms.

[2] The Kyans, Kiñahs, and Lanahans stow their paddy in barns built for the purpose. The floor is six feet above the ground, and the posts are encircled with circular wooden discs to keep off the rats.

[3] The Kiñahs move away every few years so as to be always near heavy bush which they prefer for their farms.

6: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

people are the descendants of migrants from the interior of the Second Division of Sarawak, and especially from the headwaters of the Batang Lupar. Travelling chiefly by way of the Katibas and Ngemah rivers, the first of these migrants reached the primeval forests of the Baleh in the early 1880's, but it was not until about forty years later, following serious conflict with the Brooke Government, that permanent Iban settlement was achieved [2]. Today the Baleh is an exclusively Iban area.

During the years—from 1949 to 1951—when my field research was undertaken [3], the Iban of the Baleh region were still little touched by the outside world. Their men, with long hair and bodies profusely tattooed, and their women, clad in ikat skirts of their own weaving, were all still pagan and pre-literate; and throughout the whole Baleh region, Iban culture—in all its extraordinary richness—was still a flourishing reality. In this essay then, we shall be concerned with the traditional ways of the Iban, ways which—because of the tolerant policies of the White Rajahs of Sarawak—have survived unscathed into the modern world.

THE IBAN LONG-HOUSE

All of the Iban of the Baleh region still live in long-houses. Architecturally there is nothing very remarkable about an Iban long-house, but many of them, out of sheer length, make an impressive spectacle. Rumah Tungku, for example, one of the long-houses selected for detailed discussion in this essay, extends in an uninterrupted line for more than a sixth of a mile. Standing on an elevated terrace, well beyond the reach of flood waters, and lifted high on score upon score of hardwood piles, it stretches—as do all Iban long-houses—along the bank of a river. Here and there, entry ladders of notched logs lead up like gangways to the *tanju*, an open platform that runs the entire length of the spindly structure and gives access to the public gallery and the family apartments beyond. Over both gallery and apartments a low-pitched roof of wooden shingles forms an unbroken expanse. At first glance the whole sprawling building seems like some huge barracks or pavilion.

Few long-houses have the dimensions of Rumah Tungku (sixty to a hundred yards is more common a length), but, casually regarded, all Iban long-houses do have the appearance of being compact architectural units, and this appearance has led some writers (Baring-Gould and Bampfylde 1909: 27) to the supposition that the long-house is therefore the outcome of some kind of communal or group organization and ownership. For the Iban, however, this supposition is very far from the truth.

Although the platform (*tanju*) and the gallery (*ruai*) of a long-house do extend without interruption throughout its entire length, an Iban long-house is, in fact, made up of a series of independently owned apartments, and

6: Freeman. E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

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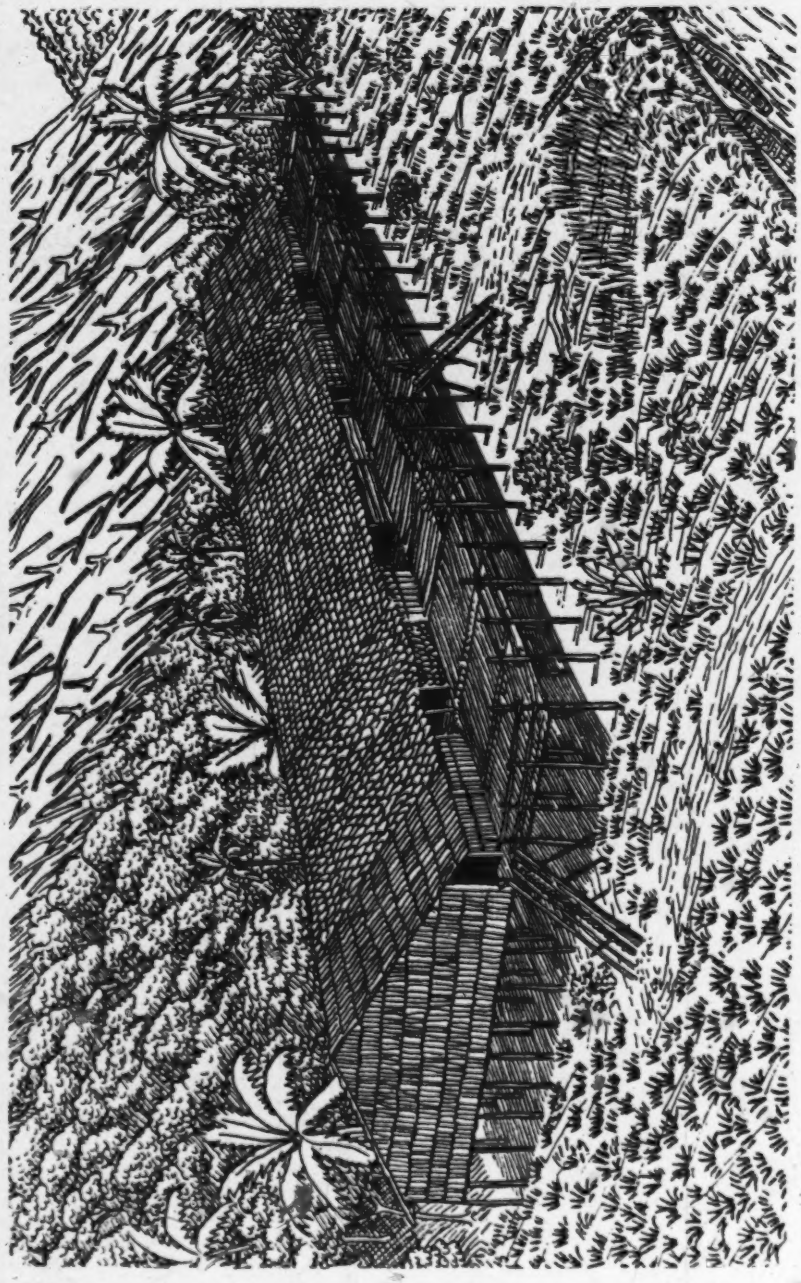

Fig. 1. An Iban long-house

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

[Facing p. 62]

A DYAK WOMAN MAKING A MAT WITH SPLIT CANE

She is seated on the outside open veranda of the Dyak house. The flooring in the picture is made of the round trunks of small trees, and these are tied down with cane. Sometimes the flooring is made of split palm or split bamboos, but more often of laths of *bilian* or ironwood, so as to stand exposure to the weather. The outside uncovered veranda is a favourite place to sit in in the cool of the evening.

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7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

DYAK HOUSES

Showing the outside open platform where paddy, etc., is put out to dry. Where the eaves are very low, parts of it are often raised to admit more light into the house. The palm trees in the picture are cocoanut palms.

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[FACING p. 88]

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

they have to camp out on the river-bank. It is quite remarkable how well the Dyaks manage under such circumstances. I have always admired the way in which in a very short time wood and creepers are got from the jungle, and a little hut put up for me on a cleared spot on the river-bank. The creepers are used for tying the wood together; the *kadjang* from the boat is fastened up for the roof of the little hut; a flooring, two or three feet off the ground, is made of laths of wood tied together with creepers; my small cork boat mattress and curtain are fixed up; and in about an hour's time I am safely lodged for the night. The Dyaks themselves are very hardy. They will wrap themselves up in their *puah*, or sheet, and sleep in the open air, sometimes on mats; but if there are no mats, they will make for themselves a bed of leaves on the ground, and think it no great hardship to sleep on this.

When travelling has to be done on foot, one has to walk on a Dyak jungle path, which consists of the trunks of the giants of the forest placed in a line. No attempt is made to hew the round trunks into an even upper surface, so one must walk carefully lest he slip off; for in some parts the bark on these tree-trunks is rotten, and in others there is a growth of wet slippery moss. Over the jungle streams there are Dyak bridges made, like the path, of the trunk of a tree, sometimes with a light hand-rail tied to it, sometimes not.

I have often travelled on foot through the jungle, accompanied by Dyaks carrying my baggage. We have walked in single file on these trunks of trees, and have listened to the weird jungle sounds—the creaking of giant trees, the strange cries of insects, or birds, or monkeys. And sometimes in the gathering darkness,

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

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A River Scene

The illustration shows some native huts by a river which flows through a cocoanut plantation.

[facing p. 206]

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

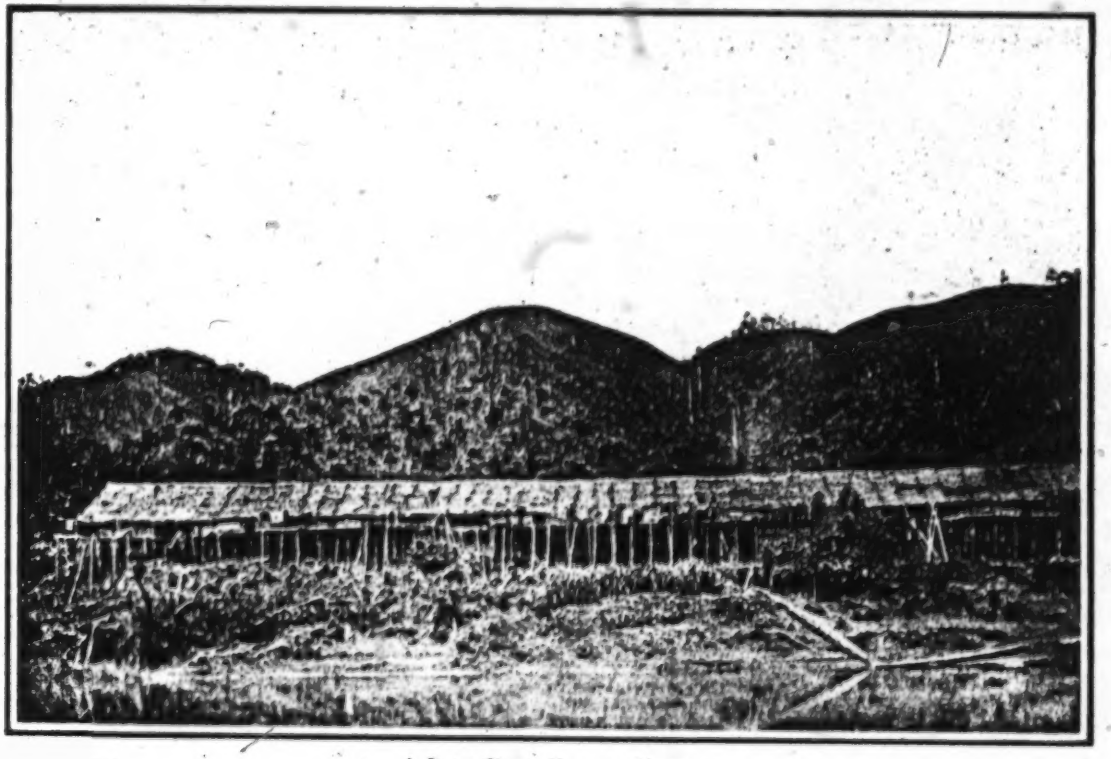
asks for food, at once a feast is held, and offerings made to that spirit. As the omens of birds are observed and obeyed by the Dyaks, and the special omen birds are looked upon as sons-in-law and messengers of the great god Singalang Burong, when a bird of ill omen comes into a Dyak house, the Dyaks hold a feast and make offerings to the gods and spirits. When a man has recovered from a long and dangerous illness, very often a feast is held to thank the spirit of disease for leaving them, and to beg him to stay away a long time. Also when a valuable jar (*tajau*) is brought into a house a feast is often made in its honour.

In addition to all these feasts, there is the *Gawai Mandi Rumah*. This is a kind of house-warming, and is held when the Dyaks go into a new house. Offerings are made to the gods and spirits, and a blessing is asked upon the new house, so that those who live in it may have good crops, good health, and live happily together.

The Dyaks also sometimes hold feasts which are social gatherings for eating and drinking, and have no connection with any religious idea. These are called ***Makai di ruai*** ("eating in the hall"), or ***Makai rami*** ("eating joyfully in large numbers").

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

[Facing p.242]



A Long Dyak Village House

When a house is very long, as in this case, in addition to the ladders at each end, there are often extra ladders in the middle of the house. One of these ladders is seen on the right of the picture. The logs of wood on the ground are for walking upon.

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II:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

291
317
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415
301

(1) The gathering of the clay (Iban pot-making).

301
323
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285
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142
516

(2) Clay being laid out in the sun (Iban pot-making).

[p. 156a]

11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

323
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(3) Dried and pounded clay being sieved.

4 Sieved clay being mixed with water prior to kneading

[p. 156 b]

14: Howell M-5 (ca. 1900) 1900 OC6 Iban OC6

192 *Puting* or *tabang*, a twig.
Tangkai, a stalk, pedicle.
Tampok, calyx.
Kantok, a young leaf.
Lungkom, a bud.
Sulit, *telesak*, or *selinggir*, a shoot, a sucker. [Of palms, e. g., a sago sucker, *anak unlong*].
Daun, leaf.
Bungai or *bunga*, flower.
Buah, fruit.
Kulit buah, fruit skin or rind.
Leka or *igi*, seed.

XVIII. Rumah Panjai—A Dyak House (lit. a long House).

192 *Taba*, the site.
Langkar, measurement of the site.
342 *Tenong ai*, the divination to test the healthiness of the spot.
Tiang, a post. *Ngentak* (*entak*) to set up a post.
Tungkat, a prop.
Sukong, a strut.
Pengerat or *suit*, a tie beam.
Pemujur or *sanding*, a joist.
Kalang, a joist (above the *pemujur*).
Gegar or *gelegar*, the flooring composed of small sticks, bamboos, or split *pinang*, laid side by side.
Pemetong, wood to finish off the ends of the *gelegar* (placed at right angles to them).
Dinding, the wall. *Tiang dinding*, wall posts.
Ibal, beams to which the walls are tied or nailed.
Ruai, the covered verandah, or public hall of the house.
Bedilang, the warming place in the *ruai*.
Penyurai or *pantar*, that part of the verandah immediately below the eaves.
Padong, a bedstead.
Tanju, the outside platform or open verandah of the house.
Tempuan, the passage used as a public thoroughfare and also as the place where the paddy is pounded [it lies just outside the doors of the rooms (*bilik*)].
Lubang penutok, an opening (above the *tempuan*) to admit the pestles being raised when pounding the paddy in the mortar (*lesong*) upon the *tempuan*.
Padong Bugan or *P. gantong*, the upper or fenced part of the *lubang penutok*.
Bilik, the room. *Pintu*, the door.
Tempuan bilik, the passage in the room.
Lubang pelua, a window.
Lubang penyengok, a spy-hole or small door of communication between two rooms.
Tukang (or *penukang*) *atap*, the window in the roof (made by raising up a portion of the *bilik* roof).
Sadan, the garret (above the *bilik*).
Pemanggai or *P. ranggong*, a shelf for mats, etc., below the *sadan* and above the *ruai*.
Dapur, the cooking place in the *bilik*.
Para, a shelf above the cooking place upon which the firewood is placed.
Pengait genok (or *labu*), hooks upon which the water gourds are hung in the *Tempuan bilik*.
Penyambut sadan, tie beam.
Pepan ara, joist above the *penyambut sadan*.
Sengkar menawa, tie beam above the *pepan ara*.
Gelegar (or *gegar*) *sadan*, the flooring of the *sadan*.
Sekang rumah, tie beam above the flooring of the *gegar sadan*.
Jempayan or *jempayan*, tie beams at back and front of the house.
Pletar or *jempayan chit*, tie beams that support the rafters.
Kasan, the rafters.
Tiang prabong, the King-post.
Plebungan, small tie beam at right angles with the King-post reaching from *kasan* to *kasan*.
Prabong, the ridge of the roof (inside the roof).
Langkiai, *pretar* or *pletar*, the laths supporting the roof covering.
Atap kayu or *atap papan*, the roof shingles.
Atap dann, leaf-roof covering. *Kaki atap*, the eaves.
Tungkup (or *tutup*) *prabong*, the ridge of the roof (outside).
Penambai, an ensign (denoting a ceremonial feast) hoisted on the *Tungkup prabong*.
Sabar ai, the wall at the back of the house.
Panggong or *luan*, the end of the room where the jars are stored.
Tebelayar, the walls at the back of a long house.
Penyambang or *penyambai*, the ends or both ends of a Dyak house.
Tangga, the stair-case or ladder of a long house.
Anak (or *gigi*) *tangga*, the steps or notches in the log which serves as the stair case.
Pala tangga, the head of the stairs at either end of the long house.
Kaki tangga, the foot of the staircase.
Penjuang, posts on either side of the staircase to support the railings.
Alan-alan, the railings of the stair-case.

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

PART 1

THE IBAN BILEK-FAMILY.

1. The most salient characteristic of Iban social organization is the practice of long-house domicile. Anyone who has travelled in the interior of Borneo is familiar with the conspicuous shape of a long-house: an attenuated structure supported on innumerable hard-wood posts, it stretches for a hundred yards or more along the terraced bank of a river, its roof—of thatch, or wooden shingles—forming an unbroken expanse. Superficially viewed the Iban long-house has the appearance of being a single structural unit, and many casual observers have made the facile inference that the long-house is therefore the outcome of some sort of communal or group organization and ownership.(1) For the Iban, at least, this inference is the very reverse of true. Among the various families which make up a long-house community there does exist a network of kinship ties, but the Iban long-house is primarily an aggregation of independently owned family apartments. The fact that these apartments are joined one to the other as to produce a long-house detracts little from their essential autonomy. Indeed the unbroken expanse of roof tends to conceal the fact that the Iban long-house is fundamentally a series of discrete entities—the independent family units of a competitive and egalitarian society.

2. A long-house, then, is made up of a series of independently owned family apartments which are joined longitudinally one to the other so as to produce a single attenuated structure. Long-houses do, however, vary very considerably in size: from houses of three or four family apartments and scarcely over a chain in length, to houses that sprawl for more than three hundred yards along the bank of a river and contain upwards of forty different family sections. But before discussing in detail the overall composition of the long-house, let us first turn to a brief examination of the distinct sections or apartments from which every long-house is constructed. Each of these apartments is owned and occupied by a particular family group, and these family groups are the basic corporate units of Iban society. The principal divisions of a family apartment are:

(*a*) the *bilek*, or living room,

(*b*) the *sadau*, or loft,

(*c*) the *ruai*, or roofed gallery,

(*d*) *tanju*, or open platform.

All of these are shown in Fig. 1.

The bilek.

3. Of these four parts the most important is the *bilek*, which is the family living room, and the place where the valued property of the family is stored. Each *bilek* is divided off from the *ruai* by a substantial wall of wooden planks, and side walls separate each *bilek* from the rooms on either side of it. Each *bilek* has one main entrance on to the *ruai*, with a hinged door of wooden slabs that is normally kept closed. At night it is usual for these doors to be barred from the inside. It is also fairly common for the side walls of a *bilek* to be broken by smaller doors or openings, so providing inter-communication between the family apartments of the long-house. But this practice is far from universal; internal doors or openings are only found if the neighbouring families are closely related (e.g. siblings or close cousins), or if they are on particularly friendly terms with one another. On several occasions I witnessed the blocking up of these internal openings following a dispute and quarrelling between neighbouring families. The *bilek* of a long-house always vary slightly in size, and the width of the wall facing on to the *ruai* is some indication of the economic status of the family that owns it. In Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut, the smallest *bilek* was 12ft. 6ins. wide by 16ft. deep, while the largest was 23ft. wide by 17ft. 6ins. deep. The larger *bilek* of Rumah Tungku—a fifty door long-house of the Sungai Tiau—measured 25ft. wide by 24ft. deep.

4. The *bilek* is the normal location for cooking, eating, sleeping and a multitude of domestic tasks. Each *bilek* is equipped with its own cooking place, or *dapur*, which traditionally is situated at the front of the *bilek* against the dividing wall with the *ruai*. It consists of a rough scaffolding of wood which supports a raised hearth of packed clay, and some feet above, a wide rack on which fire wood is stacked ready for use. At this hearth the women boil rice—the staple food of the Iban—and prepare the relishes which accompany it. In the ordinary course of events, all the members of family—men, women, and children—eat together in their *bilek*, squatting in a circle around the meal which has been laid out in the centre of the room. At nights, finely plaited mats are spread, mosquito curtains suspended, and the *bilek* becomes the sleeping place of all but the young unmarried men, who more often favour the open gallery, or *ruai* of the long-house. At the back of the *bilek*, and frequently along both its sides, are stacked the huge jars (*tajau*) and bronze gongs (*tawak*) which constitute the main capital resources of a family, and its chief form of inheritable property. Kept carefully packed away in wooden trunks, or securely wrapped in bark-cloth are the hand-woven fabrics (*pua kumbo* and *kain kebat*), used only on ritual and gala occasions, which are another of the important indications of the wealth and status of an Iban family. Ranged in racks around the walls are plates and bowls, and an extraodinary medley of minor possessions.

The sadau.

5. Above each *bilek*, and jutting out over the *ruai*, is the *sadau*, which is a kind of garret or loft. Here, in immense bark bins, is stored the *padi* grown by the members of the *bilek*. A series of smaller containers hold the carefully selected seed (each family possesses many different types of *padi*), to be used at the next sowing. Most important of all these is the seed of the *padi pun*—

(1) Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, 1909, p. 27.

a singular variety of inherited rice—which is the centre of the elaborate fertility cult upon which Iban agriculture is based. Also in the *sadau* are kept the various implements used in farming, and the mats, baskets and trays used when *padi* is being husked and winnowed.

The ruai.

6. The door of each family *bilek* opens on to another section known as the *ruai*, which is always of about the same area as the *bilek*, and which—like the *bilek*—is the private property of the family to which it belongs. In an Iban house of traditional design, the division between the *bilek* and the *ruai* is marked by the main supporting post (*tiang bumbong*) of the ridge-pole; thus the rear half of the ridged roof covers the *bilek* while the front half covers the *ruai*. Unlike the *bilek*, a family's *ruai* has no side walls, so that all these independently owned sections are joined to produce a continuous, roofed gallery, which runs the entire length of the long-house. Throughout its length the *ruai* maintains a fairly constant width. In Rumah Nyala, for example, the average width of the *ruai* was about 23ft., while in Rumah Tungku it was 25ft. The *ruai* serves many purposes. Three principal parts may be distinguished. Immediately adjacent to the wall dividing the *bilek* from the *ruai*, is a section about three to four feet in width, known as the *tempuan lesong*. Here stands the *lesong*, a large wooden mortar, in which the women of the family pound their *padi* with long hard-wood poles, so to husk it. Most of these *padi* mortars are fitted with sounding boards which, vibrating in time to the pounding poles, send a lively, staccato rhythm reverberating through the surrounding hills. Here also, in the *tempuan lesong*, firewood is stacked, and fighting cocks are tethered.

7. Adjoining this narrow strip comes another section, usually about 10 to 12 feet in width, and completely unobstructed by posts or partitions; it thus forms a common corridor giving access to all parts of the long-house. It is, in fact, a kind of village street, and except on ritual occasions when a family may cordon off its own particular portion, it is used by all the members of the community as a kind of general thoroughfare. The flooring of this corridor section is usually made from bamboo slats, which are springy to the tread. The *ruai* also serves many other purposes in addition to those of a street. It is the site of many domestic occupations; it is here, for example, that women suspend the frames on which to process their cotton (*nyikat ubong*), and later, set up their weaving looms. When religious rituals (*gawai*) are held, the *ruai* is the place where the all-important shrines (*ranyai*) are erected, and it is also the pathway for ceremonial processions (*niti daun* and *ngerandang*), and the invocation of the gods (*timang*). Here too, the spirit mediums (*manang*) perform their principal rites, and here the bodies of the dead are laid during the period of public mourning and ritual wailing which precedes burial.

8. One side of this corridor or 'street' is flanked by the entrances to the various *bilek*, or family rooms, and on the other it is skirted by a series of open spaces which extend to a low wall right under the eaves of the long-house roof. Each family possesses one of these open rectangular spaces, known as *padong ruai*. Varying in width in accordance with the *bilek* of which it is an extension, but always having a regular depth—usually about eight to ten feet—the *padong ruai* is one of the most important parts of the long-house. Floored with adzed, wooden planks, and furnished with huge *rotan* mats, it is the place where the people of the house, and particularly the men, spend most of their leisure time. The various *padong ruai* of a long-house are the main centres of community life and social intercourse. Here meetings (*baum*) are held, and disputes formally heard and settled. Here guests are welcomed with tobacco and betel, and offerings to the gods performed. The cool and convivial *ruai* is also the site for many minor tasks: the place where nets are knotted, knife handles and sheaths carved, mats plaited, and cotton tied ready for dyeing. At nights it is the place where the men gather in informal groups to talk about their *padi* farms (a perennial topic of conversation), to discuss an omen or a dream, or merely to gossip, avidly and aimlessly. It is on the *ruai* too, and in the evenings, that the enthralling sagas (*enseru*) of the Iban are chanted and recited—sagas which tell of the fantastic adventures and miraculous feats of their culture heroes, the Orang Panggau. By young and unmarried men, the *padong ruai* is commonly used—despite the prowling dogs—as a sleeping place, and sometimes they construct for themselves, at the very edge of the *ruai*, and under the eaves of the roof, special bunk-like enclosures, termed *agu*. The line between the corridor and the *padong ruai* is marked by a row of secondary supporting posts, which also stand at the edge of the projecting *sadau*, or loft. Close to these posts, and in tangled, smoke-blackened clusters, hang the highly prized heads, or *antu pala*, with which so many of the most cherished values and beliefs of the Iban are associated. Beneath each such cluster of heads is a hearth (*hedilang*) of stone or clay, on which fires are kindled—both on chilly nights, and during certain head-hunting rituals. It is important to note that these heads (*antu pala*) are always the property of one particular family, and are never owned by the long-house group as a whole.

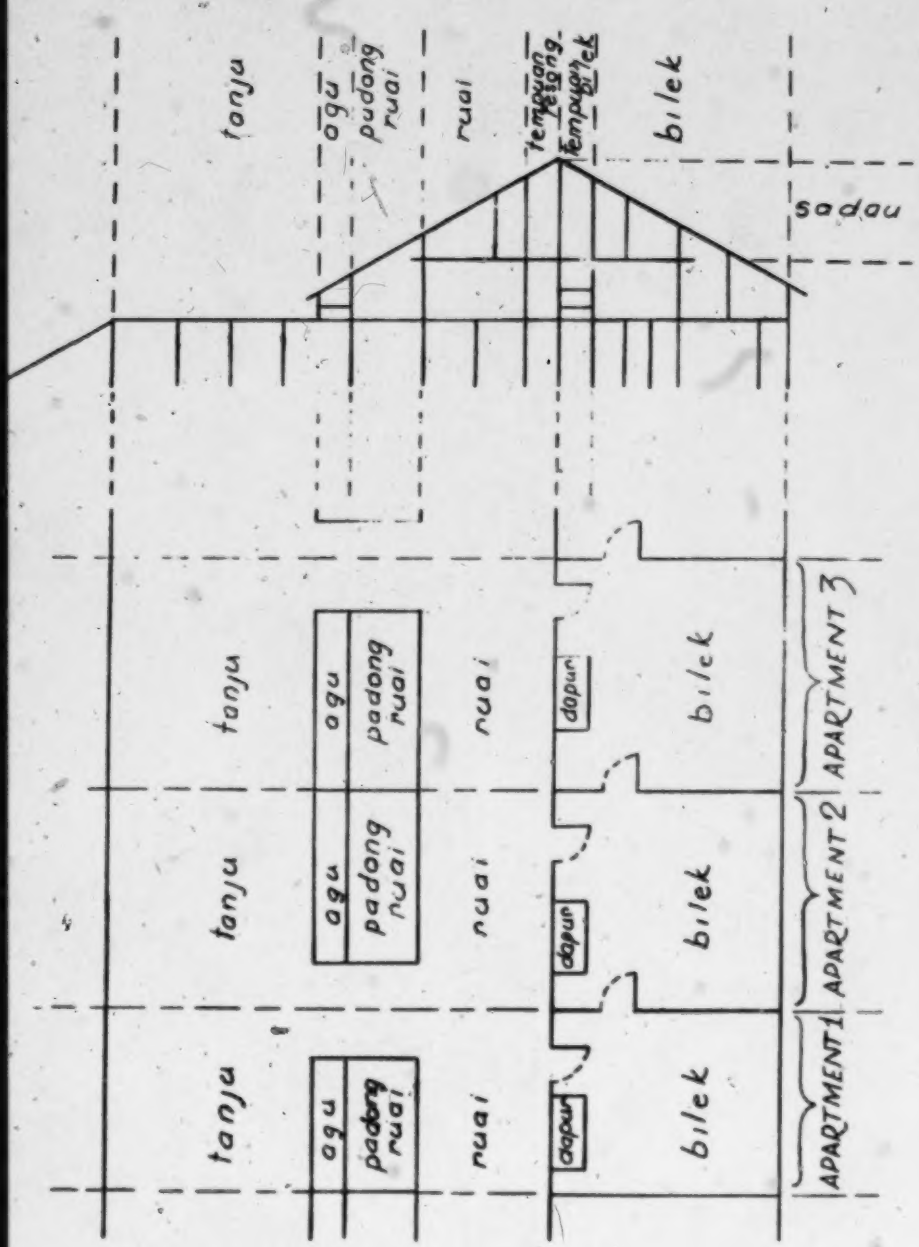
9. Like the *bilek*, of which it is an extension, each section of the *ruai* (composed of the three divisions just described) is owned by a particular family. It is the duty of each family to keep its section of the corridor or long-house 'street' in good repair so that all may use it. But this general use involves no diminution of ownership rights; each family retains the right to cordon off its section of the *ruai* during the performance of certain rituals, and on other occasions to insist (on the pain of fine) that prohibitions governing its use be fully observed by all members of the long-house community. The boundaries of each family section of the *ruai* are clearly marked by the main supporting posts of the long-house structure, but quite often dwarf walls (12 to 18 inches in height) are erected on the *padong ruai*. These plank partitions, which make convenient back rests, further demarcate the various family sections.

The tanju.

10. Beyond the *ruai*, and so not covered by any form of roof, is the *tanju*, an open platform, usually about 20 to 25 feet wide. As with the corridor of the *ruai*, all the independently owned sections of the *tanju* are joined to form an unbroken, raised platform, which fronts the whole

[FACING p.2]

Figure 1a



PLAN of an IBAN LONG-HOUSE
(Rumah Tungku, Sungai Tiau)
Scale – 0 5 10 15 20 feet

342 long-house. At its outer edge (the front of the house) there is usually some kind of a railing, which at regular intervals is broken by the main entrances to the long-house. These consist of deeply notched hard-wood logs (*tangga*), which lead down—often at a steep angle—to paths ending at the river's edge. Ideally, a *tanju* is constructed from slats of iron-wood (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*), which can withstand for many years the extremes of the Borneo climate. A *tanju* is in constant use, for it is the place where, after the harvest, a family's *padi* is dried and winnowed prior to storing, and where, every few days, small quantities of *padi* are sunned before being pounded and sifted in readiness for cooking. Again it is on the *tanju* that the women's cotton is exposed to the cooling night dew, and the blazing midday sun, during the prolonged and intricate ritual that precedes dyeing.

342 11. It is the joining together of a number of different family apartments which produces the
621 attenuated structure known as a long-house. As has been stressed, each apartment (consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai* and *tanju*), is independently owned, and it follows from this that the general maintenance and repair of each section is always the responsibility of one particular family. Anyone familiar with the Iban will have observed the considerable range of variation among the different family apartments of a long-house; apartments roofed with meticulously made shingles may be found interspersed with apartments roofed with hastily improvised thatch; a *tanju* of well adzed iron-wood slats may be found side by side with one roughly made from split bamboos, so rotted as to imperil anyone who treads them. A long-house then, consists of a series of discrete sections joined roof to roof so as to produce a single architectural unit. And each of these apartments is the private property of a particular family. A long-house community is thus, in essence, a village consisting of a single street of attached houses. Let us now examine more closely the various family units of which a long-house community is composed—the houses, as it were, within the village—for these are basic corporate groups of Iban social and economic life.

The Iban bilek-family.

592 12. In Government and other publications the family apartments of an Iban long-house are commonly referred to as "doors". A long-house, that is, is usually described as consisting of so many doors—10 doors, 20 doors, or whatever the number may be. This term has the advantage that it may be applied to any of the indigenous peoples of Borneo that live in long-houses, but in this report—which is concerned exclusively with the Iban—I propose to employ the term *bilek*. *Bilek* is the word which the Iban use to describe the separate enclosed rooms of a long-house, but it is also a term used, by the Iban themselves, to refer to the family group which owns and occupies one apartment of a long-house, as, for example, in the phrases: "*Nya umai kami se bilek*" ("That is the farm of our *bilek*, or family"), and "*Kami se bilek tabin magang*" ("We, a *bilek-family*, are all ill"). The family group, described in the phrase: "*kami se bilek*" (we, the members of a *bilek*), is the basic unit of Iban social and economic organization. In the discussion that follows, I shall refer to this unit as the *bilek-family*.

13. The members of a *bilek-family* are always intimately related by ties of kinship and affinity, but it is a unit primarily defined by the criterion of local residence. Its members—as a group—own and occupy one, and only one, of the separate family apartments of a long-house, each apartment consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai* and *tanju*, as described. The *bilek-family* is also a domestic family; that is, its members constitute a single household. Food is prepared and cooked for the *bilek-family* as a whole, and its members usually eat together, sharing a common meal. The *bilek-family* is also an allodial unit, possessing both land and property in its own right. It is likewise an independent entity economically, cultivating its own *padi*, and a wide variety of other crops. Ritually, each *bilek-family* is a disparate unit with its own magical charms (*pengarah*), its own particular set of ritual prohibitions or taboos (*pemali*), and its own special kind of sacred *padi* (*padi pun*). Among the Iban there are no clans or other large-scale corporate kin groups, and so the *bilek-family* is a social unit of primary and paramount importance.

592 14. The *bilek-family* has two dominant characteristics: it is a small group numerically, and
162 a simple one genealogically. Table 1, shows the range in numerical composition of the *bilek-families* of three long-house communities in the Baleh are: Rumah Nyala (25 doors), of the Sungai Sut, Rumah Sibat (32 doors), of the Sungai Melinau, and Rumah Tungku (30 doors), of the Sungai Tiau.(2) These three long-houses are discrete entities both territorially and socially, and they may be regarded as constituting a reliable sample for an examination of the social organization of the Iban of the middle and upper Rejang.

Table 1. Numerical Composition of the Bilek-family.

Number of persons in bilek-family:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14
Frequency: R. Nyala	—	7	3	4	3	2	2	1	0	—	1	—
R. Sibat	3	2	7	4	9	4	—	—	3	—	—	—
R. Tungku	2	4	9	9	6	7	7	1	3	—	1	1
Totals:	5	13	19	17	18	13	9	2	9	—	1	1

(2) These data refer to the composition of Rumah Nyala as on 1st May, 1950; Rumah Sibat as on 1st September, 1950; and Rumah Tungku as on 1st July, 1950.

The Sites of Long-houses.

85. All Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers, or streams navigable by dug-out canoes. The Baleh and its tributaries drain broken and hilly country, and their involuted courses contain many rapids. These difficulties of terrain mean that suitable sites for long-houses are often hard to find. What is needed is a terrace, some 20 yards wide, sufficiently elevated to escape the threat of floods (some of the rivers rise 30 to 40 feet above their normal levels following exceptionally heavy rains), and sufficiently level to enable the house to extend lengthwise. In the central portion of most long-houses the floor level is some 10 or 12 feet above the ground. At the ends it may be as much as 30 feet, but should the terrace fall away more sharply than this the architectural difficulties are so severe as to prevent the building on of further apartments. This problem is sometimes solved by 'stepping' the house, so that its floor is on several different levels (as, for example, the house of Penghulu Kuleh, in Sungai Amang), but this arrangement is not favoured, and is resorted to but rarely. Another limitation on the length of a house is the ritual prohibition (*pemali*) against a long-house spanning a tributary stream of the river on to which it abuts. The spanning of such a tributary, even though it be no more than a trickle, is believed to bring misfortune to all the people of the house, and is always avoided. The ritual danger is that the river spirits, offended by the filth and refuse cast beneath the long-house, might seek retribution.

86. The number of apartments which a long-house can contain, is limited then, by these two factors. In some areas suitable sites are so rare that houses have to be built on steep spurs, several hundred feet above the river from which the unfortunate women have to fetch, in gourds, all the water required for domestic purposes. Even Rumah Nyala, in the not intractable lower reaches of the Sut, is now hemmed in by a small stream at one end, and by a sudden falling away of the ground at the other. The usual solution when a community finds itself in this position is for additional *bileks* to be built directly on to the front of the long-house. This results in two parallel rows of apartments each abutting on to a common open platform, or *tanju*. In the case of Rumah Nyala, for example, there were 20 family apartments in the main part of the long-house, giving it a total length of 301 feet. Two other families had built on to the *tanju*, and three others, who were sharing apartments in the main house, planned to do so in 1951. Rumah Tungku, to take another example, is most favourably situated in the wide basin of the Tisu, one of the tributaries of the Sungai Mujong. Here the moderately flat land has enabled 39 apartments to be built in one line, giving the house a length of a little over 300 yards. The house, has however, been constructed in a very slight curve, so that it is not possible to see from one end of the *ruai* right through to the other, lying just over a sixth of a mile away. In addition to these 39 apartments in one line, there were five more built on to the *tanju*, and one protruding from the back of the house. The five remaining families of the total community of 50 *bileks*, were either recent arrivals from other areas, or the junior sections resulting from *bilek* partition; and although all of them had constructed farming huts (*dampa*) of their own, none had, in 1950, built on to the main long-house.

The Dispersion of Long-House Communities.

87. The Baleh is still a sparsely populated region. The Iban are pre-eminently a riverine people, and their occupation of a new territory is always by way of the rivers. Infiltrating into the diverging branches of the Baleh, they have, in the last thirty years, dispersed over a wide area. This process is still continuing; the area enclosed by the points to which they have so far radiated is probably about 1,300 square miles. Far from all of this area is actually in use, and much of it is still virgin jungle, but it does represent the territory over which Iban rights of occupation have been established. For this region, as a whole, the density of population is only about nine per square mile, and nowhere does it rise above 18—20 per square mile. The long-houses in which all the people of the Baleh live are scattered along the banks of the 300 miles of river which they have so far occupied. This means that throughout the region one encounters a long-house about once in every two to three miles. Sometimes long-houses may be found that are within hailing distance of one another, though this is a distinctly rare event. Nowhere are there clusters of houses, such as occur among the Land Dayaks of the First Division, or the Iban of the Rejang Delta.[16] The universal rule is that each long-house constitutes a single community; in other words, among the Iban, the village and the long-house coincide. Moreover, traditionally, each long-house community is an autonomous entity, not subject to the control of any other group

88. To-day, of course, every long-house is subject to Government control. Thus within the Baleh there are six districts, each in charge of a Penghulu, appointed by, and responsible to Government. The six districts were, in 1948:

Name of Penghulu	*District*	*Number of Long-Houses in District*
Penghulu Temengong Koh ..	Ulu Baleh	9
Penghulu Jugah	Ulu Baleh and S. Meriral ..	15
Penghulu Grinang	Ulu Baleh and S. Gat ..	29
Penghulu Sibat	S. Mujong and S. Melinau ..	22
Penghulu Rabong	S. Mujong	26
Penghulu Jenggut	N. Baleh and S. Sut ..	32

(16) At Bawang Aman, for example, some 18 miles down river from Sibu, there are six long-houses all within earshot of one another. All the people of this area cultivate swamp *padi*.

the advent of Government control, the situation is changing, for the Iban are now hemmed in by boundaries beyond which slash and burn cultivation is not permitted. In the Baleh area however, a plentiful supply of land still exists, and there is, as yet, no real pressure upon the recently erected boundaries. The re-settlement of the Baleh in 1922 was under general Governmental surveillance, and each long-house community was allotted a roughly defined territory bordering the banks of the main river, or one of its tributaries. But the re-occupation was en masse, by scores of different long-house communities, and there was no system of survey, or legal registration. 621 311 423

136. Territories seem to have range from about five to fifteen square miles, according to the size of the community, and the most favourable sites, at the heads of the rivers, were granted to those who had remained faithful to the Brooke regime during the years of disaffection and rebellion. However, the allotment of a territory did not mean that the members of the community concerned held this land in collective, or communal ownership. What it did mean was that all *bilek-families* had *equal access* to the land. Among the Iban, ownership of land is established by the felling of primary jungle. Thereafter, the land belongs to the *bilek-family* responsible for this first felling, and it has full discretionary rights over the usufruct of the secondary jungle which springs up within a few months of the harvest. These rights are not in perpetuity however. Should a *bilek-family* migrate to another district and take up permanent residence there, its former land rights lapse; they may be assumed by remaining kindred, or if the entire community migrates, simply abandoned. 621 423 425

137. A pioneer community begins then, as a group having common and equal rights of access to a specified tract of virgin forest; year by year its component *bilek-families* establish ownership over different sections of this territory, until finally all of the land is privately owned. At the same time fruit-trees are being planted, and, in some areas, rubber plantations established; these too are privately owned by the *bilek-families* that plant and rear them. A long-house community consists therefore, of a series of *bilek-families* all of which hold in private ownership areas of secondary jungle, fruit trees, and sometimes, rubber plantations, within the confines of a compact territory. This much the *bilek-families* of a long-house do have in common, but farming land is never held in collective ownership.

138. Nor, among the Iban, is there anything resembling a village green (such as the *marae* of Polynesia), which belongs to the community as a whole. Privately owned land approaches to within a few feet of the long-house structure. The only exception is the burial ground, or *pendam*. This invariably consists of a spur rising from the river, on the banks of which the long-house is situated, for corpses are always carried by canoe. The jungle on the chosen spur is left in its primeval state, and never entered except for burials and on ritual occasions. Here, all *bilek-families* inter their dead, and throughout the undergrowth (for graves are left untended) are scattered jars, gongs, and many other kinds of burial property, which constitute the last inheritance of the dead. A burial ground falls into the same category as virgin jungle, over it there are no rights of ownership, but to it all *bilek-families* have full and equal rights of access. Occasionally it happens that two neighbouring long-houses share the same *pendam*, but in general, each community has its own site, where the bodies of those who once lived together lie buried. 621 423 764

139. We have seen that among the Iban the *bilek-family* is the basic land-owning group. This also applies to all other forms of property. Thus the long-house structure itself is made up of a series of separate apartments, each of which is privately owned. The only exception is the *tangga*—a huge log of hardwood, adzed to shape and deeply notched at regular intervals to form a ladder by way of which entry may be gained to the elevated *tanju* of the long-house. Often, they are about 20 feet in length, and weigh hundreds of pounds; sometimes, several *tangga*, connected by small stagings, are required. In the Baleh, *tangga* always lead on to the open *tanju*—either in the front of the house, or at the ends. They are spaced out at even intervals, and in most long-houses there is one entrance to about every seven *bileks*. In Rumah Nyala, for example, with 22 actual apartments, there were three entrances (c.f. Figure 2), while Rumah Tungku, with 45 apartments, had eight, and Rumah Sibat, with 29 apartments, four entrances. 621 423 342 417

140. The making of a *tangga*, transporting it back to the long-house, and then erecting it, complete with railings, is no light task. Usually it is undertaken by the men of the small group of *bilek-families*, whose regular way of entry it will become. But if it be the main *tangga* of the long-house (i.e. the first entrance to be constructed by the founding families), all the men of the long-house join in the work. This is mainly for ritual reasons. The main *tangga* is looked upon as a kind of portal connecting the long-house with the outside world; by this route both good and evil may come to the inhabitants, but by proper ritual performances, it is possible, say the Iban, to consecrate the *tangga* so that it will become a ladder by way of which riches and good fortune are carried up into their house. Understandably, all *bilek-families* are eager to join in the ceremony, and enjoy the benefits it brings. In the full scale rites, various of the gods (*petara*) are summoned, in a chanted invocation (*timang*), to visit the long-house, and on their arrival, offerings are made and sacrifices performed. In the *timang* the attributes and the actions of the gods are described. With them they have brought a marvellous *tangga*, which has the power to attract to the long-house all that men desire. It cannot be seen, of course, for it is in the form of soul-stuff, but as the gods erect it, the Iban put their newly hewn *tangga* in place, and the substances of the two become magically fused. Further offerings and sacrifices are made, prayers of consecration uttered, and the ceremony is concluded. Such a *gawai tangga* is usually organized by the *tuai burong* (augur), but the materials used in the offerings (e.g. *tuak*, eggs, rice, etc.) are supplied in equal proportions by all the *bilek-families* of the long-house. It is thus a corporate rite, involving the whole community, and the *tangga* is the common property of all those who participated. 621 423 796 417

825 776 158. Each of these seven species is the incarnation in bird form of a supernatural being—known by the same name. In their form as gods they are cardinal figures in Iban invocations (*timang*) and sagas (*ensera*), and they are believed to attend all of the more important Iban rituals (gawai). Like most Iban gods they are anthropomorphic, and they occasionally appear to the Iban (in their dreams) in human shape. Five of them: Ketupong, Membuas, Beragai, Papau and Bejampong, are married to the daughters of the high god Lang Singalang Burong (whose special concern is with warfare and head-hunting), and this, in itself, is a clear indication of their importance. Again, each of them has parents, and grandparents, all named, who are important figures in the Iban pantheon. For example, Apai Membuas (the father of Membuas), whose full name is: Bujang Bungah Jajingah Tinggi Serukong, lives beneath the immense buttresses of a mythical *plai* tree (Alstonia ochalanis); his special task is the safe-guarding of *bedilang* (the hearth-stones over which enemy heads are placed), and the manufacture of the *rotan* casings (*ringka*) in which the heads are secured, and the circular framework (*bengkong*) from which they are suspended. In certain head-hunting rituals Apai Membuas is invoked, and brings these objects (*bedilang, ringka,* and *bengkong*) to the *gawai*.

776 825 787 159. Each of the seven supernatural beings we are discussing has the power to become incarnate as one particular bird. These incarnations never vary; thus, Membuas always takes the shape of a Banded Kingfisher. When any one of the seven birds is seen or heard by an Iban, this is believed to be a pronouncement by the gods, either commending, or cautioning against, a proposed course of action. Everything then depends on interpreting the prognostication aright, and assenting to it with zeal. Many details must be taken into account: the precise movements of the bird, the type of cry it uttered, and the exact time and place of the event. Each bird is regarded as having a special character of its own, and to be associated with varying kinds of activity. Furthermore when two birds of different species are encountered in close succession (as often happens), it is their joint meaning which must then be taken into reckoning. Because of all these variable factors, the whole system is exceedingly complex, and to become an expert augur a man must go through many years of diligent and patient apprenticeship.

160. It is important to realize that for the Iban their augury system has a divine sanction, and further that its whole intention is to guide and help, not to hinder and harm. Misfortune is not caused by omens of evil, but by man's failure to heed their warnings, by his wilful disregard of the prognostications of the gods. As the Iban themselves put it: "These omen birds, they announce to us those things which are hurtful and those which are not; but if we do not understand their language, if we do not heed them, then we shall suffer:" (*"Sida burong tu, bisi inadah ka utai pemedis, utai enda; tang enti kitai enda nemu jako padah sida, enti enda beluli sida, nya kitai ka pedis"*). Cases do occur, of course, of persons failing to heed an omen—be it from inadvertence or perversity; every Iban can recall such happenings, and tell of the misfortunes that ensued. Indeed, accomplished augurs place great emphasis on precedent in arriving at their conclusions.

787 825 781 161. In the normal course of events omen birds are encountered fortuitously as men and women go about their ordinary daily tasks, but, should the occasion demand it, they may be either deliberately sought or deliberately avoided. To take the last happening first: whenever a group of Iban are engaged on any undertaking of consequence (e.g. moving to a new house, fetching a bride, erecting a new apartment, performing *padi* rituals, etc.), they take great care to see that certain of their number—usually two or three girls—are equipped with brass gongs, which are beaten without cease until the business in hand is concluded. Whether from a party trailing through the jungle, or a canoe gliding down one of the fast-flowing rivers, the throb of gongs is a familiar sound in Iban country. Its purpose is to forestall any possibility of an accidently encountered omen bird causing the entire venture to be abandoned. Such behaviour may seem flagrantly inconsistent, but in such cases it is usual for at least one auspicious omen to have been obtained in advance, and always, for a series of propitiatory offerings to have been presented to the gods. The attitude is rather that of a man, who having taken good counsel, and every possible safeguard, decides—for better or for worse—to shut his ears to all further admonition. As this suggests, an Iban's attitude towards his gods is far from passive, rather he is constantly concerned with the ritual manipulation of magical and supernatural forces, so that they will combine to his advantage.

787 162. No venture of importance may be embarked upon until a favourable augury has been secured. This involves the deliberate seeking of one or more of the seven omen birds. The augur sets off, usually alone and at daybreak, and wanders in a chosen tract of jungle. As soon as he hears or sees the bird he is seeking, he cuts a nearby sapling, at the same time uttering a few dedicatory words. This sapling (*kayu burong*, or *paong burong*) then becomes a token of the auspicious prognostication, and as such is used in subsequent rituals. It is rather as though the voice of the bird has been captured, and its potency for good stored within the cut sapling. A *kayu burong*, or omen-stick, is thus regarded as a kind of talisman, and if the occasion be a momentous one, it is preserved with the greatest of care for many years. If the augur encounters unfavourable omens, the projected venture is temporarily postponed; and after a few days he tries again. An auspicious omen is usually obtained in due course, but if the auguries are persistently bad, the proposed undertaking must be permanently abandoned.

The Founding of a New Long-House.

621 787 342 790 163. Any man may seek omens (*beburong*) on his own account or for his *bilek-family*, this is a private matter and need concern no-one else. It is the *tuai burong* however, who holds the very important position of augur to the long-house community as a whole, and who is responsible for safeguarding its ritual welfare. Perhaps his importance may best be illustrated by a brief description of the ceremonies which mark the founding of a new long-house. In Iban eyes these ceremonies are of immense consequence, for the future good fortune of the whole com-

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

munity is largely dependent upon their efficacy. It is the *tuai burong* who is in charge throughout. First, he determines, by the taking of auguries, if the proposed site is auspicious; then, when the moon is waxing, he gathers *kayu burong* for the ritual clearing of this site. The omen bird sought on all of these occasions is the *nendak*, whose cry is invariably 'cool' and propitious. Armed with some ten *nendak* omen-sticks, and accompanied by a band of women, clad in their ikat skirts, and beating gongs, the *tuai burong* leads the whole community to the selected site (*taba*). At its centre, where the first supporting post is to be erected, an offering (*piring*) is presented; then five men and five women, with the *nendak* omen-sticks held horizontally before them like staffs, parade up and down the site, brushing through the undergrowth. The purpose of this rite (called *ngerembang*) is to rid the site of all evil influences. This done, the actual clearing of the jungle begins. The next major event is the erecting of the first supporting post (*tigng bumbong*) of the new house. Once more, the *tuai burong* must first procure a *nendak* augury. Again, most *tuai burong* possess bundles of charms, known as *penchelap rumah*, which are believed to ensure that a long-house is kept in a ritually 'cool' and benign state; these too are taken to the ceremony. Into the hole, which has been dug in advance, an offering (*piring*) is cast, together with a river stone (to make the house 'cool'), the blood of a sacrificial cock, and fluid in which the *tuai burong's* charms have been rinsed. Prayers and invocations are uttered, and then, the post, tied about with further offerings and ritual objects is hauled up into position. This first post is usually that of the *tuai burong's* apartment, and the tuai burong is regarded as the *pun rumah*, or founder of the long-house. Similar rites are performed for the main posts of all the other apartments, and the arduous work of erecting them is shared by all the men of the community. However, as soon as the main posts have been set in place, each *bilek-family* operates as an independent unit. During the building there are many ritual prohibitions (*pemali*) to be observed, and the *tuai burong's* duty it is, to see that they are not transgressed.

164. Finally there comes the culminating ritual of first entry. When all the *bilek-families* have assembled on the river bank below the new long-house, the *tuai burong* presents to each of them three *nendak* omen-sticks, gathered by him earlier on the same morning. These three omen-sticks are later carried up into the long-house and used to consecrate all of the new apartments; one is fastened to the wall of each *bilek*, another over the cooking hearth (*dapur*), and the third to the central post of each *ruai*. Other omen-sticks are planted beside the path leading up to the long-house, and at the foot of the *tangga*, or entry ladder. The *tuai burong*, carrying his omen-sticks and charms, is the first to climb, but before he does so, there are further vitally important ritual acts to be performed. Beside the *tangga* a number of cleft sticks have been erected. Each *bilek-family* has prepared its own supply of *asi pulut* (a kind of glutinous rice, cooked in sections of green bamboo). Just before entry, each person eats a little of this rice to mark a point of ritual abruption from the past, and the bamboo container (*lumpang*) is left in one of the cleft sticks, to symbolize the leaving behind of all things that are evil. Each person also carries a small river stone (symbolical of a benign state of health) which is deposited at the base of the *tangga*, with an offering to the gods consisting of an egg. Then, immediately before setting foot on the *tangga*, each person treads on a large river boulder—a magical rite, bestowing the longevity of which the stone itself is a symbol. On entering the house, the whole community gathers on the *ruai* of the *tuai burong*, where a full-scale offering (*piring-lapan*) is laid out by several of the elder women. When the offering has been performed, the *tuai burong* takes a cock, and waving it in benediction over the heads of the throng recites a prayer of consecration. The cock is then sacrificed, and some of its blood smeared on the foreheads of all the men, women and children making up the community. This achieved, the members of each *bilek-family* partake once more of a little rice, and this marks the termination of the rites. On the evening of the same day, each *bilek-family* performs a series of further offerings and sacrifices, to consecrate their separate apartments, and under the general supervision of the *tuai burong*, the various prohibitions (*pemali*) which have been in force during the construction of the house are brought to an end (*jadi mali*). During the next three days, no person may leave the immediate precincts of the long-house, lest by encountering a bad augury he jeopardize the laboriously contrived state of ritual concord of the new community.

165. This account of the inauguration of a long-house has been much abbreviated, but it does provide sufficient evidence to show that an Iban community is ritually a corporate entity. This is certainly the opinion of the Iban themselves, and it finds expression in an emphatic conviction that the behaviour of any one of the component *bilek-families* of a community can exert a baneful influence on the entire long-house. As we have seen, immense care is taken to ensure that the various *bilek-families* begin their association propitiously, and thereafter, it is the duty of the *tuai burong* to do all in his power to preserve this salutary state of affairs.

166. When the Iban speak of the ritual condition of a long-house they liken it to the temper of a human organism. When in sound and normal health, a man's body is said to be *chelap*, or cool, and when it is afflicted by disease or disorder, *angat*, or feverish. These same terms are applied to the long-house. Ritually, it may be in a 'cool' and benign state (*rumah chelap*), or, what is greatly feared, it may become 'heated' (*rumah angat*), charged with a kind of evil and contagious essence that threatens all of its inhabitants. The danger is not physical but spiritual —though to an Iban mind, physical and spiritual events are but different aspects of the same continuum—and its agency is mystical. This dreaded state of affairs—*rumah angat*—is liable to be brought about by any serious transgression of a ritual prohibition (*pemali*); but the danger can be averted by the paying of an expiatory fine to the *tuai burong*. Such a fine—if the breach be a grave one—always includes a fowl (or a pig) which is sacrificed, to exculpate the transgressor, and free the community from any threat to its well-being. Moreover, these ritual payments must be prompt, for should any misfortune (and especially death) befall one of the other *bilek-families* before amends have been made, the transgressor is then held responsible, and under Iban *adat*, may be heavily fined. A long-house may also become *angat* from an invasion of malevolent

spirits. This is made known in dreams, and should there have been a series of unwarranted deaths, a community will often flee their long-house, and stay away for months, while waiting for it to become 'cool' again. One of the strangest sights which the hinterland of Sarawak has to offer is an Iban long-house, whose inhabitants have fled in terror of 'unseen monsters.' Hung about with esoteric emblems and charms—an unavailing barricade of protective magic these—and strewn with a medley of abandoned possessions, the house stands aloof, silent and deserted, as though its owners had indeed been suddenly spirited away.

167. The rites which accompany its construction, and those of the ceremony of first entry are all aimed at producing a long-house in which men, their wives and children, can live in ritual security and safe keeping amid the known perils of their world. Sometimes even more elaborate rites are staged. The most important of these is the *gawai engkune*, in which all *bilek-families* join. It is commonly held a few weeks after first occupation of the new house. A temporary shrine (*ranyai*), containing offerings, omen-sticks, charms and pieces of wood termed *engkune*, is erected on the *tuai* of the *tuai burong*. For one whole night, a party of four men skilled in the task, encircle the spot, chanting an invocation (*timang*) to the gods. In magical and poetic words, they describe the arrival of the gods, who, at the behest of the Iban, build for them a wonderful new house. Especially prominent is Apai Nendak (the father of the omen bird, Nendak), who brings most of the materials for this house built by the gods, and furnishes it with charms potent against all manner of evils. The gods, it is believed, enter the shrine charging the objects stored there with supernatural power, and to conclude the ritual, the shrine is dismantled, and its contents shared out by the *tuai burong*, among all the *bilek-families* of the long-house. To a representative of each, he hands an omen-stick from the shrine, uttering a prayer (*sampi*) as he does so:

> "May these hallowed omen-sticks, which I now share out, protect and guard our long-house, so that free from all harm, from all sickness and disorder, we may dwell in coolness and in shade, in happiness and health—forever!"

Also shared out for preservation are pieces of wood from the shrine, for these are symbolical of the materials used by the gods in their miraculous building, which is thought of as being mystically fused with the very timbers of the Iban's own house.

168. For the maintenance of the ritual well-being of a long-house, all of its *bilek-families* are responsible. This is well illustrated by what happens when a *bilek-family* decides to leave one long-house and join another. The act of leaving is conceived of as being fraught with certain dangers for the rest of the community; and as liable to cause a fissure in the fabric of their ritual immunity. Accordingly, Iban *adat* insists that on departing from any long-house, the *bilek-family* concerned, must present the *tuai burong* with a quittance payment, or *pemali rumah*, as it is called. This absolves the family from any responsibility should their departure concur with an outcrop of sickness, or any other serious trouble, in the remaining *bileks* of the long-house. The amount of the quittance payment depends on the time of the year at which the departure takes place. The normal and proper time for moving is during the two or three months that elapse between the end of harvest, and the beginning of felling and planting. During this period the quittance payment is small: *sipi kuna* (i.e. $2), a small jar (*jagok*), and one fowl (which is sacrificed, if trouble ensues). After the commencement of a new agricultural cycle however, it becomes much heavier, for there is then a possibility that departure will injuriously affect the growing *padi* of the entire community. In this instance the quittance payment must consist of: *mungkul lapan* ($8), an adze (*bliong*), a war-knife (*nyabor*), and a sacrificial pig. In fact, irregular departure (i.e. after the planting of *padi*) is an extremely rare event, and is only likely to occur after severe quarrelling between *bilek-families*.

169. This theme of the ritual unity of the long-house community finds expression in many other fields of activity. For example, when a death occurs the whole community is affected; all farm work is abandoned for three days, and numerous mourning prohibitions come into force immediately after the burial. These, on pain of fine, must be observed by all members of the house, during a period which lasts for about one to two weeks. Again, during and following certain of the ceremonies performed by spirit-mediums, or *manang*s, all the members of the long-house become responsible for obeying prohibitions (*pemali*), which may have their origin in only one or two *bilek-families*. Thus, for three days after the ritual slaying of an *antu buyo* (a malignant spirit held to be responsible for the death of infants), no-one may bring any plant or other living thing into the long-house, for this is symbolical of the re-birth of the dreaded spirit; nor may anyone enter the long-house after dark, as an *antu buyo* is wont to do when seeking his victims. In both cases the penalty is a heavy one (i.e. equal to the spirit-medium's fee, which may be as much as $20), and a claim that the prohibition was broken unwittingly gives no reprieve. Similarly, when a woman is giving birth, or during the treatment of cotton with mordants prior to dyeing (i.e. the *ngar* process), and on many other ritual occasions, no stranger may enter any part of the long-house. On these occasions it is usual to display some kind of banner, announcing that the long-house is under ritual interdiction—indeed, the long-house is rather like a ship under quarantine. Thus, Iban always take the precaution of asking for permission, before they enter a strange long-house. The customary phrase is: "Can we climb here?" ("Tau niki ditu?"); uttered at the foot of the *tangga*. If space permitted, many additional examples could be given, but for our present purposes, sufficient evidence has been adduced to show that magico-religious concepts play a major part in uniting a long-house community under the general surveillance of their *tuai burong*. And, as we shall see presently, the *tuai burong* is also a key figure in the organization of the foremost rites of the agricultural cycle.

17:Bedford D-5 (1958) 1959 OC6 Iban OC6
Rumah Bujak

175 During the occupation the Japanese cut a channel through
[133] the narrow waist of a *tanjong* downriver from Simanggang. As a consequence water was diverted from a large loop of the river which dried out leaving an area of very fertile padi land. The people of Rumah Bujak settled on this land in 1943.

[423] After the occupation disputes arose regarding right of tenure of land on which the people of Rumah Bujak had settled. Several legal actions arose, as a result of which the people of Rumah Bujak were allowed to remain where they were. They also retain the rubber gardens at the site of their old house at Sungai Pinggai.

342 The present house was built in 1946. Several *langkaus* (temporary dwellings) were built alongside the house in 1955.

The original house built at Pruan contained 19 doors. Since its completion 11 *langkaus* have been built at the ends of the original longhouse.

162 The population of the longhouse was 169 at the start of the
621 investigation. During the period of investigation there were five births and one death. The death was that of a monster shortly
165 after birth, following a pregnancy complicated by hydramnios.

361 The house is built on low-lying tidal swamp. On two or three days each month the ground under and about the house is
356 flooded at high tide. The rooms are small, dark and hot. Some are kept moderately clean but some are very dirty. The majority
342 of rooms have separate kitchens.

231 Animals and poultry are reared under the house. The ground underneath and around the house is liberally strewn with
364 rubbish of all descriptions. There is no formal system of sewage
514 disposal. The occupants of the house defaecate and micturate through holes in the verandah and at the rear of the rooms in the time honoured fashion. Faeces are devoured by pigs and
[231] poultry.

Agriculture

241 The people of Rumah Bujak own extremely fertile swamp
433 padi land. They grow sufficient rice for their own needs and

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
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"'. . . These figures are not wholly attributable to failure of crops of increase of immigration, but largely due to partial or complete abandonment of their farming life by large sections of the natives of the country in favour of rubber planting. . .'"

"'. . . So long as it pays the natives better to plant rubber and buy their rice, they will naturally prefer to do less hard work on their padi farms than in previous years.'"

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In addition to making rubber production a viable economic alternative to small holders, the Rajah's policy was influential on the patterns of movement of the shifting Iban cultivators. By making it possible and encouraging each family to plant its own rubber estate, rather than allowing companies to plant large gardens to be worked either by plantation workers living in company quarters, as in Sumatra, or commuting, as in parts of Malaya, the Rajah made ownership of real property and interests therein a new fact in Iban adaptation. In contrast to the high degree of mobility characteristic of shifting cultivators, owners of rubber gardens are more sedentary, residing in proximity to the trees they tap daily. As one informant said, Kaki kami nyau lekat tegal getah ("Our feet were stuck because of rubber,"

[342] Anyau Bakit, 16 September, 1969. In some areas, for example, Bawang Assan, Ibans built permanent longhouses for the first time as they planted their rubber gardens. The eight-door Rumah papan built close to the present-day site of Rumah Riang, was a novelty because of its

permanence and beceuse it was the first longhouse in memory built of planks.[18] In other areas, for example Oya Road and specifically Rumah Tindit and Rumah Meruan, the advent of rubber has been influential in the fragmentation of longhouses which have been abandoned as individual families moved away to be nearer to their gardens.[19]

Adaptation to rubber production was a shift in the value system and social structure of the Iban community. For, whereas previously successful rice cultivation was a requisite for any Iban male seeking recognition and upward mobility, rubber planting opened a new way to wealth and acquisition of economic security, so much desired and a sure sign of the blessings of the gods. The conflict between the traditional padiculture and rubber growing was expressed in a wide-spread story that rubber ate rice.[20] According to one version,

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[18] Owing to the practice of shifting cultivation, longhouses were impermanent structures, built of softwood posts, split bamboo floors, bark walls and thatched roofs, according to several informants (Unchat Chok, Tuai Rumah Gaong).

[19] The ceremonial importance of the longhouse continues and bilik - families return occasionally for gawai and other ritual activities.

[20] Pringle describes a similar story among the Saribas Ibans (1970-203), Freeman among the Balleh Ibans (1955-105), and Geddes among the Land Dayaks.

314 231 423 Melanus who manufacture sago flour (cf. Morris, 1964). Sago palms are held by Iban families under customary rights. The trunk of the palm is sawed into 30 inch lengths, split and rasped (diparut) for pig fodder. 262 Sago also is eaten as a rice substitute when the rice supply is exhausted 342 and Ibans have no money with which to buy more.[20] In the Middle Rejang and its tributaries, where the nipa palm does not grow, the leaves of 757 the sago palm (daun mulong) are used for thatching and coverings. The sago nut (buah mulong) is a part of Iban pharmacology, being highly astringent and used in the treatment of diarrhea.

285 314 462 412 Numerous reeds grow both in low-lying and higher land, and are collected for the manufacture of mats and baskets by women. The reeds (ui, purun, bemban) are cut and taken to the longhouse where they are alternately dried and soaked until the outer covering (kulit) can be cut away (disimu', dilit) with a sharp, long-handled knife (lungga). The species bemban is the most valuable because it requires great attention in preparation for weaving. It is exposed to dew (diperambun) for five to seven nights in order to achieve the prized lightness of color. If rain falls the bemban is quickly retrieved by the women for rain will blacken the bemban. The weaving of baskets and mats is done by women on the longhouse ruai or covered common verandah. In addition to the

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[20] A period that is described colorfully but dreadfully as maya bulan gantong sendok, "when the rice-ladle hangs (empty over the pot)."

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TABLE 31

Length, Age and Construction of Selected Longhouses

Longhouse	Area	Units	Year Built	Age at Time of Survey	Partly Built by Tukang*	Depor Separate from Bilik	Separated Storage Area
Empaling	Assan	8	1966	4 years	X	X	X
Ringkai	Lubok Guchi	18	1950	20 years	X**	X	X
Amboi	Munggang	15	1958	12 years	X	X	
Banta	Aup	14	1962	8 years	X	X	
Nyala	Aup	33	1956	14 years	X	X	X
Muyang	Batu Wong	31	1940	30 years		X	
Salleh	Bawang Assan	20	1920	50 years+	X	X	X
Lun	Bidut	7	1939	31 years	X	X	X
Berandah	Durin	61	1942	28 years	X	X	X
Ibom	Durin Kiba	5	1945	25 years			
Luat	Kiba	4	1970	3 months		X	
Mat	Lawang	11	1949	21 years		X	
Tiang	Melanggan	24	1963	7 years		X	X
Buda	Naman	16	1952	18 years		X	
Bual	Oya Road	9	1970	5 months	X	X	
Adup	Oya Road	8	1966	4 years		X	X
Balan	Bun	12	1961	9 years		X	
Bandang	Bun	15	1970	4 months		X	
Entili	Oya Road	1	1969	1 year	X	X	
Ijau	Oya Road	13++	1949	21 years		X	
Jelian	Bun	6	1960	10 years		X	
Maruan	Oya Road	19	1946	24 years	X	X	
Nyambang	Oya Road	16+++	1969	1 year	X	X	X
Tuah	Oya Road	5	1966	4 years	X	X	

* = professional carpenter

** = tuai rumah's residence built by carpenter, but no others.

\+ - Several sections, including tuai rumah's have been rebuilt by tukang.

++ = in addition to the 13 attenuated units, 14 families are still in separate dwellings.

+++ = all separate.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 - Sibu

361 construction of the road near their house for fear that it would make
198 their longhouse angat ("hot, unhealthy") because new. Reluctantly, the engineers rerouted the road at a distance of one hour's walk from the house. After the road had been completed, the members of Rumah Buda realized the benefits offered by the road: regular transportation to Sibu, greater availability of Government services and goods, and opportunities for more contact with friends and relatives. Consequently, they have abandoned the old longhouse and are building small, individual house along the roadside.[3]

342 A final factor in the permanence of longhouse settlements is re-
361 lated to the amount of money, time and labor invested in the house's con-
[191] struction. Historically, Iban longhouses were not as sturdily constructed as the houses of other indigenous groups, such as the Kayans. The Iban longhouses were constructed of ironwood posts but flooring, walls and
[829] roofing was of less durable materials. The reason offered by the Iban, Anyau Bakit, was that the Iban never expected to occupy the house for more than five or six years before moving on to fell and farm other virgin

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[3]The forcible blocking of the original route was related in a lament by Pengulu Meringgai who reckoned that he lost about M$50,000 due to the rerouting. According to the old plan, the road would have gone through fifty acres of his land, the price of which would have risen to M$1,000 per acre. As it turned out, he, too, had to move in order to live closer to the road.

18:Sutlive E,M-S (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

361 342 [829] land.[4] We have noted already the significance the Ibans attached to the construction of the first house made of durable planks (rumah papan) at Bawang Assan.

Where longhouses are old or built of impermanent materials, they may be abandoned or dismantled. When this occurs, the occupants will move either to a new site if a more favorable one is available, or else build temporary houses (dapor, kitchen) immediately behind the old site on which the new house will be built. In three cases out of ten in which longhouses were abandoned or dismantled, the residents rebuilt on the same site. In the other seven cases, the residents moved to new sites but in no instance more than three miles distance from the former house site. In four of the ten cases, the Ibans did not construct a new longhouse but rather a cluster of individual houses, about which more will be said later.

361 241 It must be noted that while the longhouse system may be described as one of relatively permanent residence, the Ibans in some instances return only occasionally to the longhouse. For example, the occupants of Rumah Meruan live in langkau immediately adjacent their rubber gardens, returning to the longhouse only for ceremonial or judicial occasions.

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[178] [4] Dulu' suba' ambis lama' kuat diau lima tauka enam taun, pindah enga' menoa baru. Tang, diatu' enda' ulih, orang enggai agi' ("Formerly, the longest people lived in one place would be for five or six years, then move on to look for new country. But, you can't do that now, and the people no longer want to"), Anyau Bakit, interview, 22 March, 1971.

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"(According to traditional Iban views) the person who lives alone is Antu Uging-an evil spirit - for he is different, a deviant from other Ibans, else why would he want to live alone. He doesn't share in the life of the longhouse, he doesn't participate in the daily round of activities, and he doesn't accept responsibility for teaching our ways to the younger generation.

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"The Tusun Tunggu Iban ("List of Iban Fines") states specifically that Ibans shall reside in longhouses. But many people no longer pay attention to these laws. For example, the people on Oya Road have no leaders - they have tuai, but these are tuai in name only. Daily they are in the pasar, selling land, acting as representatives for Chinese who want to get native land. And, some of them have built individual dwellings and no longer live in the longhouse."

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One of the tuai rumah referred to in the interview is Tuai Rumah Nyambang, head of a community of sixteen families. Through the sale of some of his land and the acquisition of a timber permit on behalf of a logging company, Nyambang has been able to build a relatively large separate house for his family, at a cost of M$6,700. The house is built of planed boards, elevated ten feet above a smooth concrete floor. The outside is painted a light blue, the floors polished and the ceiling finished with asbestos sheets. The kitchen includes a tiled Chinese-style stove eight feet long and three feet wide, constructed to burn wood. Nyambang is comfortably ensconced with his two wives, who are sisters, and his children in this new house.

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When questioned about the proper place for Ibans to reside, Nyambang, also, insists that the longhouse is the place. Concerning his

829 621 own situation he says:

> "If my anembiak decide to put up a new longhouse, I will build a bilik in it. It's much more pleasant to live in the longhouse rather than alone."

But until then, Nyambang will make do with his present lodgings. [178] It is significant that those who formerly were considered deviant because they put up individual dwellings and lived alone have become the models whom many other desire to emulate.

C. Physical Layout of Settlements

361 342 Although the settlements within this District show considerable variations in the layout of buildings, still the central building in a majority of the communities is the longhouse. A settlement may be comprised of a single longhouse or of several longhouses. Rumah Gaong is a single house, located three miles off the Durin Road and two miles from the next nearest house. Rh. Nyala is built beside Rh. Banta at Sungai Aup. In the Bawang Assan area, there are seven longhouses, two built on the right bank of the Batang Leba'an, five on the banks of the Sungai Bawang Assan, and all within walking distance of one another.

361 342 198 There is at present no longhouse where Nyambang has built his residence, and, given the amount of his investment and the funds becoming available to his anembiak through the forest enterprise that has been opened in their area, enabling them to put up prestigious separate houses, it is doubtful that a new longhouse will be constructed. In fact, some of the anembiak already have constructed houses rivalling that of Nyambang

361 himself.

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198 Several other instances of the physical fragmentation of longhouses have occurred within the District. At Rumah Nangkai, Batang Pasai, there no longer is a longhouse but an aggregate of individual dwellings built along the rising ground where the former longhouse stood. When Rumah Tindit, Oya Road, broke up in 1962, some of the members joined together to build a new longhouse at a new site. Others, however, such as Entili, chose to build separate houses along the Road in the vicinity of the 15th Mile.

361 One man stated that Government has encouraged the dissolution of
657 longhouses for several reasons. Among these are concerns over health
423 and fire, for when illness or fire strike a house, it may sweep through the entire community. But more important in the Government's mind is the delicate problem of land-reform, an unresolved and highly critical issue that contributed to the fall of one Chief Minister and an unwillingness by
671 the Alliance Coalition to deal with it. Under Iban adat, former longhouse sites (tembawai) are held in perpetuity by members and their descendants so long as they continue to constitute a longhouse community. When they dissolve their community, however, all rights to the tembawai are relinquished and the land reverts to the State. The difficulties of keeping track of claims to long-abandonded house-sites are obvious, and a problem Government could solve through the fragmentation of those communities near the roads.

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342 In two of the four longhouses on which concentrated studies were carried out, a number of families lived in units constructed on the outer edge of the tanju' and called pelaboh. In some instances, living in pelaboh is temporary, for example, a young couple may live there until they can accumulate enough money and goods to add a permanent extension onto the longhouse proper. In other cases, living in pelaboh may be of a permanent nature. For instance, Umpi ak Paran of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Aup, has constructed a pelaboh of permanent material off the tanju' of his own section of the house, turning over the bilik to his son, Juna and his family, and settling his family in the pelaboh. Similarly, at Ruman Gaong, Sengan, the sons of Changgan, Manang Biga', no longer could live with their parents and built pelaboh, separating from the old people.

In this connection, it should be noted that pelaboh are constructed for two physical reasons as well as those already noted. At both Rumah Nyala and Rumah Gaong, the center of the longhouse is built on a nob which falls away on either side, so that the heights above the ground at each end of the longhouse are about twenty feet. The families who have built pelaboh maintain that it is unsafe as well as impractical to add on to the end of the longhouse by putting up a structure at a higer elevation. The second reason offered is that to add onto the end of the longhouse removes the family too far from the center or other end, whereas by putting on a pelaboh, the family is close to the social and political center of activities.

342 When a family builds a temporary pelaboh with the intention of
621 adding onto the longhouse in the future, its members are not considered fully participants in the affairs of the house by members who are living in the house proper. However, when a family builds a pelaboh of more enduring materials in order to give up the bilik to a son and his family, as in the case of Unpi, his generosity earns him the praise of the community of which he is readily acknowledged a full participant.

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231 The area under the longhouse generally is wet and cluttered with litter that drops through slats into the floor. Chickens are placed in rattan baskets that are suspended from the undersides of the ruai, and fed by moving a plank of the floor. Pigs root about in the muck, penned in by split bamboo fences behind and before the house and released in the early morning to grub about for any roots and insects in the secondary growth.

366 Each of the four houses, and a majority of the 37 houses surveyed, has a shophouse conveniently located nearby where matches, sugar, salt and tinned milk and meat can be exchanged for rubber or pepper. Enchul Apai Jimmy has operated his shop successfully for more than 15 years at Rumah Gaong, and Ambas Apai Suda has profited from his shop at Rumah Nyala for the past ten years. Enchul's shop is off his tanju', and Ambas' is located twenty yards from the end of Rumah Nyala.

343 Other buildings, such as smoke-houses for processing rubber and, in some communities, separate houses for chickens, pigs and goats, complete

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

423 691 Litigations about land between members of the same house are settled by the tuai rumah. If they are not satisfied with the settlement, they may make an apil ("appeal") to the pengulu, who will investigate the case.

423 177 Just as land was recognized for its economic and political potential under the traditional system, acculturation has made many Ibans aware and quick to take advantage of the opportunity to sell land. Coffee-shop deals are made between Ibans looking for profit through the acquisition and sale of land.

E. Physical Layout of Household

342 621 "The most salient characteristic of Iban social organization is the practice of long-house domicile" (Freeman 1970:1). The Iban long-house is an attenuated structure comprised of a number of independently owned family units, ranging from five to seventy units. The length of the longhouse at a particular given time depends upon several factors, among them the amount of land available to new members who want to attach onto the house, the age and quality of the house, and kin- or friendship ties with members of the house.

Although the longhouse may appear to be a single structural unit, it is in fact an aggregate of independently owned family units. The materials used in the construction of the individual units of the longhouse reflect this independent character, and in the same house building materials may vary from split bamboo flooring to hardwood planks, roofing of nipa-

342 621 thatch, ironwood shingles, zinc sheets, or asbestos tiles.

The longhouse is divided longitudinally onto family units for which each family has responsibility for construction and maintenance. Family units are divided into the following sections, progressing from the front to the back of the house and following the Iban orientation from the highest to the lower part of the longhouse.[6]

1. Tanju'

342 The tanju' is an open, uncovered porch onto which one steps after climbing the notched-log ladder or, in some cases, stairs from the ground to the longhouse. The width of the tanju' varies from 15 to 25 feet wide. The tanju' is constructed entirely of ironwood (belian, Eusideroxylon zwageri) - posts, supports and slats - in order to withstand the tropical rains and sun. At the outer edge, a railing is constructed and pieces of clothing often dried there. Clotheslines, of either bamboo or wire, may be strung from the eaves of the house to the railing. Rice and pepper are dried, rubber processed, and occasionally members relieve themselves on the tanju'. The tanjau', being the culturally highest part of the longhouse, is the terminal point of certain ritual activities.

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[6] The Ibans are an out-going people, and this orientation finds expression in their evaluation of the parts of the longhouse. The lowest is the dapor, next the bilik, the center of the ruai, the outer wall where guest are placed, and finally, the tanju'.

342 556 The quality of construction of the tanju', as well as other sections of the longhouse, varies from house to house and from family to family. Although the Ibans have been described as egalitarian, subsistence farmers, this description is doubtful or, at least, some "are more equal more than others." The longhouse and its sections is an indication of the relative wealth of its members, and while the Iban may be seemingly casual about the quality of his house, he is comparison-bent and quick to point out the faults in another's house which is in worse repair, older or dirtier than his own. Differences in wealth are apparent with the first steps onto the tanju', some of which are a peril to life and limb for a heavy visitor, being either old and apt to collapse or fashioned of loosely laid slats that shift under the step. Other tanju', especially in more recently carpenter-constructed longhouses, are made of symmetrical pieces of wood, firmly nailed onto the supports.

2. Ruai

342 [556] Separated from the tanju' by a wall of planks, or in some more poorly constructed house, bark (kulit kayu'), is the ruai. The ruai also is a general indicator of the relative wealth of each family, varying from irregularly shaped, hand-hewn slats laid parallel to the outer wall, to planed, fitted and polished hardwood planks. The ruai is covered by a roof and extends the entire length of the longhouse. Like the tanju',

342 the ruai is undivided[7] and allows for traffic from the tanju' to the bilik as well as lengthwise, up and down the house. The ruai is separated from the bilik by the dinding udok ("dog's wall"), which is attached to the main supporting posts (tiang bumbong) of the ridge-pole. From the ridge-pole (perabong), the roofs slope down on either side, over the ruai to the front and the bilik to the rear.

The width of the ruai varies from house to house, but remains fairly constant in any single house. For instance, the ruai in the former house of Pengulu Meringgai of Durin was eight feet wide, whereas in his new house [335] it is twenty-five feet wide. The ruai for Rumah Nyala, Rumah Imba and Rumah Nyelang is in each case twenty feet, a standard width being achieved by the professional carpenters who built according to the size of asbestos sheets used for ceiling.[8]

In most ruai, three divisions may be recognized, determined by the tiang (supporting posts). Next to the outer wall is an area referred to generally as the padong, formerly the place of panggau,[9] a sleeping platform raised about one foot above the floor for young unmarried men. The

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[7] On ceremonial occasions, a temporary barrier of saplings (pagar api) may be constructed to indicate that a particular ruai is taboo (mali).

[8] Asbestos ceiling sheets (dik) are four feet square and the houses have five sheets across the ceilings.

[178] [9] Few panggau remain in this District, most having disappeared within the past two decades.

342 padong regularly is eight to ten feet wide, and its length is determined by the longitudinal front of the bilik. The padong ruai is one of the most important social centers in the longhouse, for it is the area where most people do light work and, in the case of men, spend their leisure time. When not used, the padong either is uncovered or covered with an old mat, lest good mats be spoiled by dogs defecating on them or their being trampled by playing children. When used, the padong is covered with a tikai, brought from the bilik where they are kept rolled up when not in use.

512 462 During the day time, women split reeds (ngeraut ui) for use in weaving baskets and mats. Men and women separate pepper corns from the stalks, to be taken onto the tanju' for drying. Men split firewood or work on knife-handles or gunwales (gandong) for boats. In the evening, men and women gather to talk about their farms, dreams, or how the latest [574] [276] Apollo flight has upset the weather. As people gather, hosts offer sarang insap (tobacco containers) for a smoke or brass trays containing areca-nuts (pinang), betel leaves (sirih) and lime (kapu'), all the fixings for a quid.

342 513 178 Young men sleep on the padong, when not planning and carrying out romantic pursuits of unmarried women. As noted, the panggau[10] no longer

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[114] [10] Freeman's (1970:6) description of "special, bunk-like enclosures, termed agu" as sleeping places for young men is suspect, for agu means "latrine".

342 is used and the men stretch out on the mats, sometimes using mosquito
513 nets and blankets, sometimes merely covering with the ubiquitous sarong
178 (dandong).

342 Although men often claim that the ruai is the place of males in
562 contradistinction to the bilik where the women belong, this division is not evident except on ceremonial occasions. We already have described women's as well as men's activities that are carried out on the ruai, and more will be described below. However, at festivals, these divisions are more apparent when women guests are led straightway to their hostess' bilik, and men are seated on the ruai. The point of the distinction appears to be not so much an effort to keep women off the ruai as to keep men out of the bilik to provide more occasions for social intercourse with members of other families.[11]

342 A row of posts stand at the inner edge of the padong to support the
[592] sadau (loft). These posts mark the boundary of the ruai proper, or the area
[681] used as the walkway by the house. Each family bears the responsibility of keeping the ruai in good repair and, in case of injury resulting from obvious neglect, may be made to pay a fine in addition to repairing the
[927] ruai. Near the posts, smoked heads (antu pala') are hung by families own-
[372] ing them, and below the heads, an earthen hearth (bedilang) is built for

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[11] The man who spends more time in his bilik than is deemed necessary is likely to be chided as laki indu' ("ladies man").

342 727 372 periodic ritual smoking in remembrance of the heads.[12]

The ruai is an important area for ritual activities of the Ibans. 342 796 At the beginning of the horticultural year, the pandong (ritual center, with ceremonial blanket enclosing the seed, whetstone, and utensils to be used) is erected on the ruai. The ruai is the path of the bards (lemanbang) to sebayan (the after-world), and it is the way of the gods into the long-house.

Between the ruai proper and the bilik is the tempuan lesong (mortar's 342 412 place), where rice mortars and mills are kept when not in use, hence the 235 name. Firewood is stacked against the dinding udok, and fighting cocks are tethered before the owner's bilik. The tempuan lesong may be demarcated 178 by another row of posts, but in some houses there is no such row. In the modern longhouse of Rumah Nyala, several bilik have long benches attached to the wall and the tempuan lesong has become the sitting area.

3. Sadau

Over each bilik and extending about halfway over the padong ruai 251 is a loft which serves a number of purposes. The most common use of the sadau is as a storage area, where the large bark-bins (tibang) containing the family's rice supply is stored. Mats, baskets, and farm utensils may be stored in the sadau. Some families use the sadau as a sleeping area,

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114 [12] Freeman is right to stress that "these heads (antu pala') are always the property of one particular family, and are never owned by the long-house group as a whole." (Ibid.).

Some families use the sadau as a sleeping area, and young, unmarried girls spend their nights there. Occasionally, rituals are held in the sadau, such as the important ordination of the shaman (Bebangun ka Manang). If omen birds alight on the roof, offerings are made to them in the sadau and one basket is tied at the head of the ladder leading to the sadau in each bilik.[13]

4. Bilik[14]

The family living room or bilik is the most important part of the longhouse, the names of the room and family being coterminous (kami Sabilik, "we (exclusive pronoun) of our family"). The outer bilik wall is used by some families to identify themselves, with painted designs, crosses, pictures of the Malaysian King and Queen, or used air-tickets. Within the bilik, walls are covered with old newspapers, Government posters, pictures of Malay, Indian, or Chinese movie stars, and, in one frame, a collection of all the photographs friends and acquaintances have given them.

The bilik is a rectangular space, enclosed by four walls, and varying considerably in size and appointments even in the same house. In more modern houses, the dapor or cooking area is separated by a wall from the main section of the bilik. At night, the front and rear doors are

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[13] In one offering (miring) ceremony I observed, 27 persons gathered to avert death from Rumah Nyelang on which an owl (burong pok) alighted. The entire ceremony was carried on in the sadau under the roof where the owl had rested.

[14] This spelling differs from Freeman's bilik (1970:2), but is consonant with Scott (1955:29) and current spellings of Iban. The final vowel is a glide and best represented by the phoneme /i/, for in Iban the letter "e" is commonly used to indicate a schwa.

342 secured, either with key-locks or with wooden bars. It is not uncommon for windows or low doors to be cut into the walls between bilik, to allow traffic or communications, the sharing of food or gossip, between close friends or relatives who live next to one another. But when quarrels arise, these openings are closed off.

The sizes of bilik within a longhouse vary according to the number of members in different families, and the relative wealth. At Rumah Nyala, Aup, the largest bilik is 24 feet wide and 56 feet deep. The smallest bilik resulted from the division of a bilik 20 feet wide into two sections because a husband and wife divorced, yet neither could afford to put up a new bilik. A wall was built, partitioning the bilik into two.

The family cooks, eats, sleeps and stores its property in the bilik. [372] Cooking is done on the family hearth (dapor) made of clay or stone and on which iron bars are suspended. Wood is used for fuel, and fed slowly into [262] a fire below the pots placed on the bars. The staple food is boiled rice and supplemented with ferns, greens, salt-fish or fruits as condiments 512 (lauk, engkayu'). Women do the cooking, often rising at 4 a.m. to prepare 264 the morning meal and, during the farming season, enough rice to be taken by [462] workers to the farm for a noonday meal. The lunch (bekal) is commonly taken in a plastic bag by residents nearer to Sibu, but still wrapped in a betel spathe (upih pinang) where such bags are not common. Workers return about dusk, bringing with them any food-stuffs that they have gathered, and the family shares an evening meal at about 7 p.m.

352 Only the poorest families do not have at least one large bed in the bilik and mattresses of kapok are increasingly common. Beds and mattresses are purchased from Chinese craftsmen in Sibu and then transported, often with much difficulty, to the longhouse. Mattresses on beds may be covered with tikai or, if they are placed on the floor, are rolled up against one of the walls when not in use. Pillows and mosquito nets complete the sleeping gear found in many bilik.

342 513 Married men and women sleep in the bilik, along with their young children. Girls always sleep in the bilik or sadau, while boys begin to sleep on the ruai from age twelve. Nursing infants sleep with their mothers and fathers or, if space in bed is inadequate, fathers sleep apart from the others, usually on the floor not far from them. In the few situations encountered of three-generation families who operate a shop, parents in the senior generation always slept in the shophouse, sometimes with a grandchild, and the intermediate generation slept in the bilik.

342 422 Most families keep their property in the bilik, and all heirlooms, such as old Chinese jars (tajau), large bronze gongs (tawak), sets of gamelan gongs (engkerumong), and the family's sacred rice (padi pun) and rice medicine are stored there or in the sadau. Increasingly, Chinese-made cupboards, desks, tables and chairs appear in the bilik. In six of the bilik at Rumah Nyala, vinyl-covered, foam-rubber cushioned chairs and couches are found. Traditional costumes and fabrics are still stored in the bilik, but now with colorful synthetic clothes in glass-doored cupboards like display cases.

[352] [171] [291]

5. Tiko

342 178 A recent innovation in three houses, including Rumah Imba and Nyalang, is the construction of a guest room instead of the tanju' section by the tuai rumah and his deputy (mandal). At Rumah Imba, there are two such rooms, called tiko (from portico, possibly), both fitted with sliding iron-grill doors that are locked when the tiko are not in use. [353] Pictures of the late parents of the tuai rumah and former colonial officers hang on the outer wall, and windows open from each wall onto the adjacent tanju'. Tikai for covering the padong ruai are stored in the tiko where they are more immediately accessible than in the bilik or sadau.

F. Social Composition of the Longhouse

621 602 A longhouse community is comprised of a core of cognatic kinsmen and their affines. As descent is reckoned ambilineally and affiliation bilaterally, most of the members of the longhouse are able to establish some degree of relationship to some or almost all the other members of the house. The rationale offered by one informant, Anyau Bakit, was that,

[829] "we know our own and they know us. In former times, people had many taboos and it was easier to get along with people who had the same taboos. Also, with fellow kinsmen, you had some idea about their characters - whether they were good or bad. So, that, if some stranger came to your house, you wanted to find out his background before he took up residence there."

Rumah Nyala at Sungai Aup was founded three generations or approximately sixty years ago by a small group of kinsmen centering around

621 602 [563] through marriage or by construction of their own unit.[16]

Conversely, there is an equal ease of detachment of the individual 621 or family from a longhouse. We have discussed how Noel could return to his natal bilik or leave it depending upon the circumstances in which he found himself. A further extension of this ease of detachment occurs when individual families remove from a longhouse either to attach one another longhouse or to build an individual dwelling. Although gaps in a longhouse structure caused by the removal of a family to another area are not common, [681] still they do occur. By the payment of a token fine of M$30 to each family on either side, a family may remove its section of the longhouse. More often a family will move away, leaving its section of the longhouse standing, with the intention of returning or not returning to it in the future. In such instances no fine is required of the family.

[592] To summarize, in Freeman's words,

> "the fundamental nature of the Iban longhouse community. . . is a free and conditional association of corporate family groups. In other words, being part of a long-house does not deprive a bilek-family of its essential autonomy. In Iban social organization, there is no principle of more vital consequence."

621 342 178 G. Longhouse Fragmentation and Individual Dwellings

During the past decade, ten[17] of the longhouses in the 37 in which

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[183] [574] [16] Iban adat chara (law and custom) prescribes that all guests be accepted, and Iban mythology is replete with stories, with positive and negative connotations, of persons entertaining angels and unaware.

[17] Rumah Imba. Nyelang, Tindit, Pengulu Meringgai, Nyambang, Bujing, Pengulu Poh, Buda, Bandang, Luat.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

621 surveys were conducted broke up. The major reason for fragmentation was
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198 in order to build new houses, as the old ones were too dilapidated and beyond repair. Six of the communities built new houses either on the site of the old house or on a site within a distance of three miles of the old house.

Both Rumah Imba and Rumah Nyelang were begun in 1961, after the old house had been abandoned. Formerly, the people in those two houses had lived together in a single attenuated structure. But the distance to farm lands coupled with a feeling on the part of some members that they were being exploited by the shophouse of Tuai Rumah Imba prompted 25 families to begin a new house, Rumah Nyelang, downriver from Rumah Imba.

The residents of Rumah Pengulu Meringgai left their old house on Durin Kanan because it was in bad repair. In 1969, the tuai rumah built his section of the longhouse, to which several other families attached their units. But lack of funds and materials has caused a delay in the attachment of other families, many of whom are living in temporary individual dwellings in the open space beyond the new longhouse.

In the cases of Rumah Tindit of Oya Road and Rumah Buda, Naman, some of the residents have abandoned the longhouse to construct individual houses whereas others have gone together to build a new longhouse. The members of Rumah Pengulu Poh, Pasai, have broken up their longhouses completely, and have built separate houses along the knoll where their longhouse formerly stood.

621 342 178 491 Another factor which has influenced the withdrawal of some members from longhouses has been the construction of the road system, vastly improving communications between Sibu and the hinterland. For example, long before the other members of Rumah Pengulu Meringgai had left the old house, Nyanggau, an ambitious and enterprising young man had moved his family to a roadside site. Similarly, Entili of Rumah Tindit declined to build onto the new house, preferring to construct his residence along the Oya Road.

621 342 178 753 Still another reason which has prompted the breakup of longhouses, though none in this study's sample, has been the belief that a house has become "hot." For instance, in one house in the Kapit District, three members died between January and August, and the residents firmly believed that there was an antu living beneath the house and causing the deaths. When a fourth person died in September, the house was abandoned (rumah bumbus) and the people lived in hastily-erected huts until they could consider and undertake the erection of a new longhouse.

621 342 178 183 Although there is an increase in the number of individual houses which have been built in rural areas by former residents of longhouses,[18] there definitely is no mass abandonment of the longhouse system in favor of separate dwellings. To many Ibans, the young especially, the longhouse system represents a survival of a time past and one that has little meaning or use in

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[18] The 1970 pre-census data list 56 individual Iban dwellings, but this is very low, not taking into account the separation of units in Pasai, or the various tuai rumah, such as Janggu and Ringkai of Assan or Nyambang of Oya Road who have built individual houses. A more accurate figure would be between two- and three-hundred.

621 contemporary society. To others, and still the majority of Ibans, the
342 longhouse system is the jalai pengidup ("way of life") that is most mean-
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183 ingful culturally. The longhouse still is an important center for social events and many persons stated their preference for the crowd and sounds of the longhouse rather than for the loneliness and silence of a separate house.
[796] Further, the longhouse is a ceremonial center for the various gawai, to
[476] which even the newly emerging urban elite, among them some college graduates, return and take part. The mutual aid provided for the events of moment in the life-cycle of the individual has been adduced as another reason for the continuing popularity of the longhouse. And finally, the longhouse continues to provide an aura of security, in reality little, during the present period of terrorist activities.

Thus, the number of people who have left the longhouse community and built individual dwellings in rural areas is still relatively small and dependent upon those factors discussed as well as idio-syncratic reasons.

H. Urban Residence

The movement of an estimated 3,000 Ibans into the Sibu Urban area
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177 has resulted in their dispersion throughout the town and in several patterns
361 of residence. These patterns of residence are related to a number of factors,
[162] including the presence or absence of kinsmen, length of time and purpose for coming to the town, position and income and whether quarters are furnished by the employer.

361 Industrial Area, where until recently families of the Malaysian Rangers
369 lived, and where several hundred Ibans still live; and in apartments along Mission Road, Tong Sang Road and the other tributaries of Lanang Road.
[871] More than 150 Ibans enrolled in urban schools are living in school hostels or renting rooms in the pasar.

In summary, the longhouse system continues to be the predominant
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342 type of settlement pattern among the Ibans of this district. For want of
178 accurate statistics, it is impossible to determine exactly how many Ibans have left the longhouse in order to construct individual houses, but an educated estimate permits us to place the figure at between two- and three-
[369] hundred families. Of the estimated 3,000 Iban residents in the urban area, most are newcomers and live either in quarters furnished for them or in rented rooms. These residents are fairly evenly scattered throughout the urban area, with concentrations of Ibans near places of employment, schools and apartment houses.

In their attempts to ensure good luck in their work and lives, and in lieu of other means of effective control over their environment, the Ibans have highly ritualized their activities.[28] For example, there are more than two dozen rituals that must be observed for the individual from the womb to the tomb, beginning with a blessing entoned as a cock is waved over the new infant and concluding with the great mnemonic Gawai Antu. The building of a new longhouse involves more than a dozen major rituals, commencing with the "checking of the site" (ngabas taba')and climaxing with the Festival of the New House (Gawai Rumah Baru). The Iban longhouse must be built parallel to and fronting on its water supply, and constructed so that the course of the sun cuts right across the width of the house, rather than down its length in which case the house would be "hot and unhealthy" (angat).

The acceptance of Christianity by many Ibans has not been in place of but rather in addition to their old faith. The attitude of a majority of Christian Ibans is, if being Christians brought good luck to the more technologically advanced westerners, may be it will do the same for us. Thus, it is understandable that the faith and practice of the Ibans is syncretistic, with the Christian trinity placed alongside traditional Iban gods. A common sight in many longhouses is a wooden cross on the door, over which hangs a daun pingan with mysterious marks in lime, or an offering basket (kelingkang).

[28] The major rituals related to various activities number well over one hundred.

175 At the beginning of this century, recognizing that they were here
361 to stay, Ibans in the Bawang Assan area constructed the first permanent
342 longhouse in memory, the rumah papan ("house of planks"). Previously,
178 house construction had been predicated upon the frequent movements of the shifting cultivators, and was of an impermanent nature. Sedentary settlements of Iban groups have been marked by the erection of substantial longhouses. Although the future of the longhouse domicile may be in question, Iban house-types, whether individual dwelling or attenuated structure, are permanent buildings.

654 A radically new concept of land tenure resulted from the establish-
423 ment of the Lands and Survey Department which claimed the right to re-
197 gister land and to issue permits and titles. In Iban polity land was held under usufruct rights by descendants of a pioneer who cleared it. Land disputes were settled within the longhouse community by appeal to senior members or others who were familiar with migrations and genealogies. Setting up a department to handle land matters represented an incursion of external authority into Iban society, the erosion of traditional polity, and the orientation of its members to the Opis Lan Ensabi as the locus of power in land matters.

177 The Second Rajah's encouragement of Chinese trade and immigration
657 helped to produce a situation he wanted to avoid, in which sociocultural change has taken place among the Ibans. The frequent contacts and long associations of Ibans with Chinese and Malays have led to social and

653 As cash became available to Ibans and other indigenes they had
199 the means for acquiring goods in the pasar. The development of a cheap
167 public transportation system by water and road in the 1960's provided ways to and from the pasar. The sense of distance between longhouse and pasar was reduced as the travel time was shortened, and Ibans who long had been attracted to the pasar began to enter into its activities in increasing numbers. Some have made periodic visits to the pasar, others took up residence. Whereas there had been a reticence on the part of many Ibans to make their homes in the pasar, owing in part to the sense of distance from their fellows and in part to the closed economic system as they perceived it, over the past decade several thousand Ibans have moved from their longhouses to the town. The pioneering efforts of a few Ibans have led the way for many others.

199 Exposure to other ethnic groups and acculturation have led to
361 changes in residence pattern and economic activities among the Ibans of
621 this District. In the rural areas the longhouse domicile remains the
[342] most distinctive characteristic of Iban settlements, but social and physical fragmentation is increasing as more members of the longhouses spend less time in them, and in several hundred cases Ibans have erected
[178] permanent individual dwellings. It is important to note that if the longhouse community declines in favor of separate houses, the seat of the community's meetings and ceremonial activities, and area of socialization, viz., the ruai, will shift. Perhaps it is the other way around and the longhouse is diminishing in significance as less importance is attached to the ruai-centered activities.